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The Naked Chef 2



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Watercress, Rocket, Sweet Pear, Walnut and Parmesan Salad

What a pukka combination, simple and classy. Don't try to make this when you feel like it, make it when you can find perfect pears and watercress, otherwise it will taste naff.

For one person I normally use around half a pear 2 big handfuls of watercress and 2 big handfuls of rocket. If the skins are nice just give them a wash, if not remove with a peeler. Then cut them in half and deseed. It doesn't really matter

how you cut them up. Sometimes in big rough chunks, maybe sliced up or even grated. Then place into the bowl with the watercress and rocket. The pepperyness of the leaves works so well with the sweetness of the pear. Drizzle with a good extra virgin olive oil just to coat, a small squeeze of lemon juice (because the pear juice is slightly acidic but very tasty), and season well with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Toss all this together and serve. Shave over some Parmesan or Pecorino, crumble your nuts over and tuck in. I love this salad with roasted meat or as a starter on its own.

Baked Jerusalem Artichokes, Breadcrumbs, Thyme and Lemon



Serves 4-6

285ml / ½ pint double cream or crème fraîche
 Juice of 1 lemon
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
 1 good handful of fresh Thyme, leaves picked and chopped
 3 handfuls of grated Parmesan cheese
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 1kg/2lb 3oz Jerusalem artichokes, peeled and sliced as thick as a pencil
 2 good handfuls of fresh breadcrumbs
 Olive oil

Preheat your oven to 220°C/425°F/Gas7.

In a bowl mix your cream, lemon juice, garlic half the thyme and most of the Parmesan, and season well to taste. Throw in the sliced Jerusalem artichokes. Mix well and place everything in an ovenproof baking dish.

Mix the breadcrumbs with the rest of the thyme and Parmesan and some salt and pepper. Sprinkle all the flavoured breadcrumbs over the artichokes and drizzle with a little olive oil. Bake in the oven for around 30 minutes until the artichokes are tender and the breadcrumbs golden.

Wok-cooked Fragrant Mussels



Serves 4-6

2kg / 4½ lb best live Mussels

Olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, finely sliced

3 sticks of Lemon grass, outer leaves removed, finely sliced

2 fresh chillies, red, green or both

3 tablespoons finely sliced ginger

2 handfuls of fresh coriander, pounded or finely chopped

1 tablespoons sesame oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

5 Spring onions

Juice of 3 limes

1 x 400ml tin of coconut milk

Place your mussels with a couple of lugs of olive oil in a large, very hot wok or pot. Shake around and add the rest of the ingredients, apart from the lime juice and coconut milk. Keep turning over until all the mussels have opened - throw away any that remain closed. Squeeze in your lime juice and add your coconut milk. Bring to the boil and serve immediately.

Crème Brûlée - The Way I like It



Serves 6

300g / 11oz fresh rhubarb
 3 tablespoons caster sugar
 2 vanilla pods
 300ml / 11fl oz double cream
 200ml / 7fl oz full fat milk
 8 egg yolks
 80g / 2 ¾ oz sugar

Preheat the oven to 140°C/275°F/Gas 1.
 Roughly slice up the rhubarb and place it in a pan with the caster sugar and 5 tablespoons of water. Simmer until tender, divide between

6 small serving dishes which your brûlée will be cooked in, then set aside.

Score the vanilla pods lengthwise and run the knife up the pod to remove the vanilla seeds. Scrape these into the pan with the pods, cream and milk and slowly bring to the boil. Meanwhile beat together the yolks and the sugar in a bowl until light and fluffy. When the cream and milk are just boiling, remove the vanilla pods and add little by little to the egg mixture, whisking continuously. I like to remove any bubbles or froth from the mixture before dividing it into the serving dishes, on top of the rhubarb. Stand these in an appropriately sized roasting tray filled with water half way up the containers, and bake in the pre-heated oven for around 25 minutes until the custard mixture has set but is still slightly wobbly in the centre.

Allow to cool to room temperature then place in the fridge until ready to serve. Sprinkle with sugar and caramelize under a very hot grill or using a kitchen blowtorch. Lovely.

Stir-Fried Chinese Greens with Ginger, Oyster and Soy Sauce



For this dish I use any mixture of good Chinese greens I can get my hands on. It's tasty and very quick to make.

11 - 14 ounces mixed Chinese greens--bok choy, Chinese broccoli (gai larn), baby spinach

3 tablespoons walnut oil

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1/2 tablespoon thinly sliced ginger

4 scallions, finely shredded

2 tablespoons oyster sauce

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 pinches of sugar

juice of 1 lime

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Remove any blemished outside stalks from the greens. Put the spinach to one side so that you can add it to the wok or pan at the last minute, as it cooks very quickly. Prepare the rest of the Chinese greens; I normally cut the Chinese broccoli into strips and the bok choy into quarters. Plunge the greens into boiling water for about 1 1/2 minutes until just tender, and drain well.

Put the oil and the ginger into a very large, hot wok or other suitable pan and cook for about 30 seconds. Add the scallions and the rest of the ingredients apart from the seasoning. Stir, then add the spinach and toss so that everything is coated in sauce. The vegetables will sizzle and stir-fry. The oyster and soy sauce will reduce, just coating the greens. At this point season to taste. Stir-fry for a further minute and serve immediately.

Yield: Serves 4-6

Oliver's Twist

Cellophane Noodle Salad

4 ounces (100 grams) cellophane noodles

A good glug olive oil

8 ounces (200 grams) minced pork

A large pinch five-spice

3 cloves garlic, crushed

2 teaspoon sugar

A handful prawns or shrimp, any size you like, peeled and deveined

Handful plain and skinned peanuts, roughly crushed

1 bunch spring onions, finely sliced

1 bunch coriander, chopped

1 bunch mint, chopped

2 thumbs fresh ginger, grated

2 red chilli's, finely sliced with seeds

2 limes, juiced

1 tablespoon soy sauce

Olive oil

Soak the noodles in boiling water and drain.

Heat the oil in a pan, and cooking in batches, lightly brown the pork with the five-spice powder. Add the garlic, sugar, prawns, and peanuts. Mix the rest of the ingredients for the dressing. Add the drained noodles and the meat with the prawns and season with a little extra soy and a drizzle of olive oil.

Yield: 2 to 4 servings

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Mango Lassi

This Indian drink is like a mango milkshake and is delicious.

9 fluid ounces (255 millilitres) plain yoghurt

4 1/2 fluid ounces (130 millilitres) milk

4 1/2 fluid ounces (130 millilitres) canned mango pulp or 7 ounces (200 grams) from 3 fresh mango, stoned and sliced

4 teaspoons sugar, to taste, or feel free to try salt and cardamom seeds

Put all the ingredients into a blender and blend for 2 minutes, then pour into individual glasses, and serve. Feel free to try salt and cardamom seeds. The lassi can be kept refrigerated for up to 24 hours

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time:

Difficulty: Easy

Monkfish Wrapped in Banana leaves with Ginger, Cilantro, Chile, and Coconut Milk

You just can't go wrong with this combination of flavours. It's open to all white-fleshed fish. Banana leaves are very easy to buy from Asian or Latino markets. Get nice big ones to wrap your fish up in. Failing banana leaves, you can use vine leaves, which you can get in the supermarkets, somewhat smaller, but no less tasty for that. If you really can't get hold of any leaves then kitchen foil will do.

4 large banana leaves or vine leaves

A little olive oil

2 fresh red chilli's

2 sticks lemon grass, outer leaves removed, centres finely chopped

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

2 good handfuls fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

2 limes, juiced and zested

1 (400 millilitre) can coconut milk

2 tablespoons sesame seed oil

A drizzle fish sauce

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 heaped tablespoons finely sliced fresh ginger

4 (6 to 8 ounce /170 to 225 gram) pieces monkfish (can use other more abundant white-fleshed fish, such as Pacific mahi mahi, farmed striped bass, or farmed catfish)

4 rosemary sprigs or bay leaf sticks, to secure

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C/gas 8).

To make the banana leaves more pliable, hold for a few seconds over a gas flame. Leaving aside the fish and herb sticks, pound the rest of the ingredients in a pestle and mortar to make a thick paste and spoon a little onto each banana leaf. Place the fish on top and then spoon the rest of the paste on the top. Bringing the sides in and spiking it with a rosemary sprig or bay leaf stick to secure it. This will look lovely and it is natural, but I have been known to use a clothes peg or string to hold it all together. It won't be a perfect seal but this allows it to breath and steam, letting the flavours infuse, so gutsy and tasty. Put the parcels on a tray and bake for 15 minutes, then remove from the oven, and allow to rest for 5 minutes.

I serve the individual parcels on plates at the table and let my friends dissect them. When opened, the fragrant steam wafts up and smells fantastic. Serve with plain boiled rice to mop up the juices, that's all it has to be. End of story, done, lovely.

Yield: 4 servings
Inactive Prep Time: 5 minutes
minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 15

Individual Quick English Trifle

4 1/2 ounces (135 grams) raspberry gelatine

8 (1-centimeter) slices ready made sponge or Madeira cake

A good glug sweet Sherry

15 ounces (425 millilitres) ready made custard

6 ounces (175 grams) tinned mandarins

A few drops vanilla extract

1/2 pint (275 millilitres) double cream (heavy cream), lightly whipped

A small block good quality chocolate

Make the gelatine by following the instructions on the side of the packet. Pour into a dish and leave. Once the gelatine is set, roughly chop.

Put 2 pieces of cake into the bottom of each glass. Drizzle with the sherry and pour half of the custard over the cake and sherry. Spoon the gelatine over the custard, and then add the mandarins. Cover with the rest of the custard, drizzle with a little vanilla, and cover with the whipped cream. Scrape the chocolate with a sharp knife for shavings to top the lot.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 2 hours

Cook Time: 3 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Pecan Vanilla Ice Cream with Maple Syrup

2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

2 handfuls pecan nuts

1 quart good quality vanilla ice cream

Maple syrup

Heat the oven to 350 degrees F (80 degrees C /Gas 4). Mix the icing sugar with the pecans on a baking tray and sprinkle with a little water to make a thick-ish paste.

Bake in the oven for a few minutes or until toasted and caramelized. Scoop out the ice cream into 4 glasses or bowls and sprinkle over the whole pecans then drizzle with a good glug of maple syrup.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 3 minutes

Cook Time: 4 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Spaghetti with Wild Mushrooms

9 to 11 ounces (250 to 300 grams) wild mixed mushrooms (I would probably buy around 14 ounces (400 grams) mushrooms, as you have to trim a bit off)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

1 to 2 small dried red chilli's, pounded or very finely chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/2 lemon, juiced

1 pound (455 grams) dried spaghetti

A small handful grated Parmesan

1 handful fresh parsley, roughly chopped

2 ounces (55 grams) unsalted butter

Brush off any dirt from the mushrooms with a pastry brush or a tea towel. Slice the mushrooms thinly, but tear any larger mushrooms, like girolles, chanterelles and blewits in half. Put the olive oil in a very hot frying pan, and add the mushrooms. Let them fry fast, tossing once or twice, then add the garlic and chilli with a pinch of salt (it is very important to season mushrooms slightly, as it really brings out the flavour). Continue to fry fast for 4 to 5 minutes, tossing regularly. Then turn the heat off and squeeze in the lemon juice. Toss and season, to taste.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta in boiling, salted water until al dente. Drain and add to the mushrooms, with the Parmesan, parsley, and butter. Toss gently, coating the pasta with the mushrooms and their flavour. Serve, scraping out all of the last bits of mushroom from the pan, and sprinkle with a little extra parsley and Parmesan.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Mushroom Sarnie

8 ounces (250 grams) butter, softened
4 sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
1 red chilli, finely chopped
Garlic, finely chopped
A few sprigs fresh thyme leaves
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 large white mushrooms
1/2 loaf sourdough bread
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 bunch watercress, picked and washed

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C/Gas 6).

Mix the butter with the sun-dried tomatoes, chilli, garlic, and thyme leaves. Season and spoon over each mushroom. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, or until soft.

Cut the sourdough into 8 slices and spread with the Dijon mustard. Lay the watercress over the mustard and top with the baked mushrooms. Cover with the other half of bread, press down firmly, and cut.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Warm Rocket Salad

Warm salads can be blooming amazing or a complete disaster. First, you have got to get your hungry guests around the table before you plate up, so as soon as their bums are on the chairs, you are tossing the warm ingredients in with the rocket leaves. Boom, boom, boom on a plate and it's in front of them.

2 medium red onions

8 whole rashers (slices) pancetta or smoked streaky bacon

Olive oil

4 sprigs thyme

A good handful pine nuts

4 big handfuls rocket (arugula)

Balsamic vinegar

A piece of Parmesan, for shaving

Peel, halve, and quarter the onions then quarter again, to give you 8 pieces from each onion. Heat a frying pan and fry off the rashers of pancetta until crisp. Add a couple of lugs of olive oil to the pan, and add the sprigs of thyme, the onions, and pine nuts with a pinch of salt. Toss around and fry on a medium heat for about 5 minutes until caramelized and sweet (not black!).

Then, throw everything into a salad bowl with the rocket or any nice salad leaves. Drizzle generously with balsamic vinegar, this will make a natural dressing as it mixes with the olive oil. Serve with some shaved Parmesan over the top; you can use a potato peeler to do this. Munch away.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Spaghetti Puttanesca

1 pound (455 grams) dried spaghetti, the best you can get

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 handful capers, soaked in water and drained

2 handfuls big black olives, pitted

12 anchovy fillets, roughly chopped

3 small dried red chilli's, crumbled

1 tablespoon dried oregano

Extra-virgin olive oil

2 (14 ounce/400gram) cans tomatoes, drained and chopped

1 good handful fresh basil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook the spaghetti in salted, boiling water until al dente. Meanwhile fry the garlic, capers, olives, anchovies, chillis, and oregano in a little olive oil for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes, bring to a simmer, and continue to cook for 4 or 5 minutes, until you have a lovely tomato sauce consistency. Remove from the heat, plunge the drained spaghetti into it, toss it over, and cover with the sauce. Rip all the basil over it, correct the seasoning, and drizzle with good extra-virgin olive oil.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Fruit Cobbler

This is a fantastic American recipe equivalent to our crumble. Particularly good with strawberries and rhubarb, but you can use any fruit combo you like; about 680g/1 1/2 pounds of fruit should do it.

For the fruit:

*2 apricots, stoned and sliced
1 pear, cored and thickly sliced
1 pint blackberries
1 pint blueberries
1 pint raspberries
1 stick rhubarb
5 tablespoons sugar
A good glug balsamic vinegar*

For the topping:

*4 ounces butter, chilled
8 ounces (225 grams) self-rising flour
2 1/2 ounces (70 grams) sugar
A large pinch salt
4 1/2 fluid ounces (130 millilitres) buttermilk
A little sugar, for dusting*

Vanilla ice cream, as an accompaniment

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C/gas 5). Put the fruit into a pan with the sugar and the balsamic vinegar. Put the pan over the heat, and cook gently, until the juices begin to run from the berries. Pour into an ovenproof dish.

Meanwhile make the topping. Rub the cold butter into the flour until the mixture resembles fine bread crumbs. Add the sugar and salt, stir well, and then add the buttermilk to form a loose, scone-type mixture. Roll balls of the dough and place randomly over the hot fruit. Sprinkle with a little sugar, and bake in the oven for 30 minutes until golden brown. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Pot-roasted Pork in White Wine with Garlic, Fennel, and Rosemary

This pork recipe takes me about 5 minutes to prepare and get in the oven, so it's nice and quick as well as being unbelievably light, fresh and tasty. Also, pot-roasting the pork as opposed to straight roasting gives you a lovely natural sauce made with the meat juices and the wine

1 (3 pound/1.5 kilogram) pork loin, off the bone and skin removed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon fennel seeds

2 to 3 large knobs butter

Olive oil

8 cloves garlic, skin left on

1 handful fresh rosemary, leaves picked

4 bay leaves

1 fennel bulb, sliced

1/2 (750 ml) bottle Chardonnay

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

With 2 or 3 bits of string, tie up your pork loin, do this any way you like. It doesn't have to be fussy, you just want to keep the meat in a snug shape while it's cooking. Season generously with salt and pepper, then roll the meat in the fennel seeds until covered.

In a casserole pan or roasting tray, fry the meat for a couple of minutes in half the butter and a little olive oil, until nice and golden.

Throw in the garlic, herbs, fennel, and wine, then cover the tray loosely with some wet greaseproof paper and cook until an inserted meat thermometer reaches 150 degrees F. As the pork loin is off the bone it cooks very quickly. Remove from the oven and allow the meat to rest on a plate. Then, without using any more heat, finish off your sauce in the pan, scraping any goodness off the bottom and adding the rest of the butter. Remove any large bits.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Salad of Marinated Charred Squid with Cannellini beans, Rocket, and Chile

2 pounds 3 ounces (1 kilogram) squid, trimmed and gutted

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 (14-ounce or 400 gram) tin of cannellini beans, or use 6 ounces (17 grams) dried ones, soaked and cooked until tender

1 to 2 fresh red chilli's, sliced

2 good handfuls rocket (arugula)

2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice

4 tablespoons olive oil

Extra-virgin olive oil

Try to get your fishmonger to skin and gut the squid for you. Score the squid lightly in a casual criss-cross fashion. Set it aside while you get a griddle pan very, very hot. You can also use a wok or the barbecue.

Season the squid lightly with salt and pepper just before cooking, then add it to the pan. After a minute, it should be nicely charred, so turn it over and cook for a further minute. Remove the squid from the pan and set aside.

Heat up the cannellini beans and sprinkle them into a bowl. Add the sliced chilli's to the bowl with the rocket, lemon juice, and olive oil, and season. Cut the squid at irregular angles and toss it in with the rest of the ingredients. A good drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil over the top will finish it off nicely.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Panettone Bread and Butter Pudding

1 pint (575 millilitres) milk (don't use 2 percent, 1 percent, or skim)

1 pint (575 millilitres) double cream (heavy cream)

1 vanilla pod

4 medium eggs

6 ounces (170 grams) caster sugar (superfine sugar)

Panettone, cut into thick slices and buttered

1 orange, zested

3 tablespoons Cognac

A little icing sugar

To start the custard base, bring the milk and cream just to a boil in a saucepan. Cut the vanilla pod in half, scrape out the seeds and add to the pan with the zest. Whisk the eggs with the sugar until pale. Add the milk and cream and remove the vanilla.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (160 degrees C/Gas 3).

Dip each slice of panettone into the custard and pile into a buttered baking dish. Pour the remaining custard slowly over the bread, place the dish in a roasting pan and fill halfway with hot water. Sprinkle with the icing sugar and bake for about 45 minutes. When cooked, it will have a slight crust on top, but will still be slightly wobbly inside.

Yield: 8 to 12 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Proper Polenta

1 liter (34 ounces or a little more than a quart) water

8 ounces (250 grams) instant polenta

8 ounces (2 sticks) butter

2 handfuls grated Parmesan

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Bring the water to boil in a large pan. Slowly stream in the polenta, whisking continuously. Once it's mixed, continue to stir over the heat for 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the butter and Parmesan. You can add a little more water to make it the right consistency. Season and serve straight away

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Chicken in Milk

A slightly odd, but really fantastic combination, which must be tried

1 (3 pound/ 1.5 kilogram) organic chicken

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 ounces (115 grams) or 1 stick butter

1/2 cinnamon stick

1 good handful fresh sage, leaves picked

2 lemons, zested

6 garlic cloves, skin left on

1 pint (565 millilitres) milk

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C/gas 5), and find a snug-fitting pot for the chicken. Season it generously all over with salt and pepper, and fry it in the butter, turning the chicken to get an even colour all over, until golden. Remove from the heat, put the chicken on a plate, and throw away the butter left in the pot. This will leave you with tasty sticky goodness at the bottom of the pan, which will give you a lovely caramel flavour later on.

Put your chicken back in the pot with the rest of the ingredients, and cook in the preheated oven for 1 1/2 hours. Baste with the cooking juice when you remember. The lemon zest will sort of split the milk, making a sauce, which is absolutely fantastic.

To serve, pull the meat off the bones and divide it on to your plates. Spoon over plenty of juice and the little curds. Serve with wilted spinach or greens and some mashed potato.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Calzone

My London 'father', Gennaro Contaldo, makes these to use up all his leftover antipasti. They're great, a complete snack.

Basic Bread Recipe:

Just over 2 pounds (1 kilogram) strong bread flour

Just over 1 pint (625 millilitres) tepid water

1 ounce (30 grams) fresh yeast or 3 (1/4 ounce/7 gram) sachets dried yeast

2 tablespoons sugar

Sea salt

Extra flour, for dusting

Filling

2 courgettes (zucchini), sliced and char-grilled

2 artichoke hearts, char-grilled and sliced

A handful black olives

A handful sun-dried tomatoes

A couple slices Parma ham

A bunch basil, leaves ripped

A drizzle olive oil

A drizzle herb vinegar

1 ball mozzarella, ripped

A handful Parmesan shavings

A couple fresh plum tomatoes

2 ounces Montgomery cheddar

A good drizzle extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper

Maldon sea salt

For the bread:

Stage 1: Making a Well Pile the flour on to a clean surface and make a large well in the centre. Pour half the water into the well, then add your yeast, sugar and salt and stir with a fork.

Stage 2: Getting It Together Slowly, but confidently, bring in the flour from the inside of the well. (You do not want to break the walls of the well, or the water will go everywhere). Continue to bring the flour into the centre until you get a stodgy, porridge-y consistency, then add the remaining water. Continue to mix until it's stodgy again, then you can be more aggressive, bringing in all the flour, making the mix less sticky. Flour your hands and pat and push the dough together with all the

remaining flour. (Certain flours need a little more or less water, so feel free to adjust).

Stage 3: Kneading! This is where you get stuck in. With a bit of elbow grease, simply push, fold, slap, and roll the dough around, over and over, for 4 or 5 minutes until you have a silky and elastic dough.

Stage 4: First Proof Flour the top of your dough. Put it in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and allow it to proof in a warm, moist, draught-free place until doubled in size, about half an hour. This proof will improve the flavour and texture of your dough, and it's always exciting to know that the old yeast has kicked into action.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C/gas 4).

Chop and mix all the ingredients for the filling and season well.

Divide the dough into 8 pieces. Roll into balls, using flour for dusting. Then roll into little Frisbee shapes just over 1/4-inch (0.5 centimetre) thick. Place a good spoonful of your filling into the middle of each, brush the edges with a little water, then fold the rounds in half, pushing their edges to seal. Some people prefer to use a fork to do this but I just pinch them with my fingers. Dust with flour, do the same with all the others and move to a flour-dusted baking tray. Allow to sit for 5 minutes, then score the top of the bread to allow your filling to bubble over when cooking. Bake in your preheated oven for 20 minutes, until golden and scrumptious-looking, and allow to cool. Always good for picnics or as portable food.

Yield: 8 calzones

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Squashed Cherry Tomato and Smashed Olive Bruschetta

What you are just about to do makes complete sense in cooking. Tomatoes need salt, olives are preserved in salt, you've squeezed the juice out of the tomatoes, which in return draws the salt and the smoky flavour out of the olives. This makes the olives very edible and the tomatoes damn tasty. Rip in as much basil as you can afford and even a handful of rocket (arugula) if you have some. Lovely. P.S. If you have any leftovers then toss them in with some hot spaghetti.

*2 handfuls cherry tomatoes
1 handful black olives
4 to 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon dried oregano
A drizzle herb vinegar
1 dried chilli
A handful fresh basil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 ciabatta or other rustic bread, cut into thick slices
1/2 clove garlic
4 bocconcini
Parmesan, for shaving*

This is probably the quickest salad or bruschetta I make, but no less tasty for that. Very few ingredients, simple flavours, complete sense. Try to make use of the wider range of cherry tomatoes available now: yellow, tige, and plum cherry tomatoes for instance. And, as I always say, it's much better, taste-wise, to buy olives with their stones still in than without. Trust me.

Simply squash your tomatoes into a bowl. I always have to put one hand over the tomatoes as I do this as juice and pips go everywhere (generally on me). You can be as rough with the tomatoes as you like, as the salad looks much better rough and rustic than perfect and pretty. Then, gently smash the olives on a board with a hard object, like a cup or a rolling-pin. Remove the stones, throw the olives in with the tomatoes, and toss together. Add a few glugs of oil, the oregano, a drizzle of vinegar, crumbled chilli, and rip in the basil. Season, to taste, and that's your salad.

Griddle or toast the slices of bread and rub with the garlic clove, pile on the tomatoes, and rip the mozzarella and lay over the top drizzle with a little bit more oil and finish with shaves of Parmesan.

Yield: about 6 to 8 servings
Cook Time: 4 minutes

Prep Time: 5 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

My Mums Spottier Dick

This is a proper 'blokes' pudding; loads of custard, a little warmed syrup over the top, and even some cream. Superb!

4 ounces (115 grams) suet
 4 1/2 ounces (120 grams) dried apricots, chopped
 8 ounces (240 grams) raisins or sultanas
 1 orange, zested
 4 1/2 ounces (120 grams) plain flour
 4 1/2 ounces (120 grams) sugar
 4 1/2 ounces (120 grams) bread crumbs
 2 tablespoons grated ginger (or to taste)
 Pinch grated nutmeg
 Pinch salt
 1 egg, beaten
 1 pint (140 millilitres) milk

Grease a 3-pint (1 litre) pudding basin. Mix all the ingredients together, except the egg and milk. Add the beaten egg and milk and mix well. (I do this in a mixer but you can do it by hand, no problem).

Put the mixture in the basin, cover with tin foil or a cloth, and put the basin in a pan with water half-way up the sides of the basin. Bring the water to a boil, put on a tight-fitting lid, and simmer for 3 hours, remembering to top up with (add more) boiling water now and then.

Yield: 6 servings
 Prep Time: 15 minutes
 Cook Time: 3 hours
 Difficulty: Easy

Minty Mushy Peas

This is a fantastic recipe that is so quick and so simple and uses our reliable friends the frozen peas, which work really well here. Great with fish, meat, or even as a vegetarian dish with a big dollop of butter on top.

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 bunch spring onions, chopped

1 handful fresh mint, leaves picked

1 pound (500 grams) frozen peas

2 large knobs butter

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a pan and add the chopped onions, mint, and peas. Cover and leave for a few minutes to steam. Mash with a potato masher. You can do this with a food processor as well, just pulse it until smooth. Whether mashing or pulsing, when it's done add the butter and season very carefully, to taste.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Fish and Chips

For the chips:

3 3/4 pints (2 litres) vegetable oil

2 pounds (950 grams) floury potatoes, like russets, peeled and cut into large chips

For the batter:

1 cup plain flour

1 cup beer

2 egg whites, whipped to soft peaks

Salt

4 (9 ounce/250 gram) fillets haddock or cod, skin on, and pin boned

Pour all the vegetable oil into a deep pan or deep fat fryer, and heat to 300 degrees F (160 degrees C.) Blanch the cut potatoes in the oil until soft, but not coloured, about 4 minutes. Remove and drain.

Mix together the flour and the beer, and then fold in the egg whites. Turn up the heat of the oil to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C). Dip the fish in the batter and fry for a few minutes with the chips until golden brown.

Drain on kitchen paper and serve with bread and butter, wally's (battered, deep fried pickles served with ranch dressing), and pickled eggs.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 8 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Basil and Lime Sorbet

1 wineglass water (about 5 ounces)

1 wineglass sugar (equal in weight to the water)

5 to 6 limes, zested

1 glass lime juice

1 very large bunch basil, pounded to a puree

Place the water and sugar in a pan, bring to a boil, and simmer for 4 minutes with the lime zest. Remove from the heat, and allow to cool for a while. Add the lime juice and basil puree. Stir this up and leave to infuse for a while. Pass it through a coarse sieve and pour into a plastic tub or earthenware dish and place in the freezer. Generally, sorbet takes 2 hours to set. Try to stir it around every 30 minutes, if you remember. Serve it in a glass on its own.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 3 hours

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Tagliatelle with Saffron, Seafood, and Cream

A good pinch saffron

1 glass white wine

Olive oil

1 large garlic clove, finely chopped

1 pound dried tagliatelle

1 1/2 pounds (680 grams) mixed seafood (red mullet, scallops, clams, debearded mussels, squid)

1/2 pint double cream (heavy cream)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

A bunch flat parsley, chopped

Soak the saffron in the white wine. Add a little oil and the garlic to a frying pan, and cook until softened. Add the clams and mussels, shake the pan around, and add the white wine and saffron mixture. Bring to a boil and cook until the shellfish opens, discard any shellfish that remain closed.

Then, lay the rest of the seafood, parsley, and the cream on top. Simmer for 3 to 4 minutes and season to taste. Cook the tagliatelle in salted, boiling water until al dente. Drain and add to the fish, serve scattered with some of the leftover parsley and an extra drizzle of olive oil.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Seared Carpaccio of Beef with roasted Baby Beets, Creamed Horseradish, Watercress and Parmesan

The reason I like to make this dish is because, apart from being really quick and simple, it's a sociable feast where everyone can tuck in and help themselves. I love all that. I always serve this on a large plate in the middle of the table, with crusty bread and a glass of wine. Any leftovers are even more gorgeous the next day in a nice firm bap.

1 1/2 pounds (680 grams) baby beetroots

Olive oil

Approximately 10 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 handful fresh rosemary, finely chopped

3 1/2 pound (1.5 kilogram) fillet of beef

3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) freshly grated or creamed horseradish

7 ounces (200 grams) crème fraîche

1 lemon, juiced, or white wine vinegar

3 good handfuls watercress

3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) shaved Parmesan

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C/gas 8).

Wash and scrub the beets, trim the ends, and toss into a large piece of foil with a little oil, balsamic vinegar, and seasoning. Wrap and roast until tender. Cooking time depends on size.

Mix the rosemary salt and pepper on a board. Roll and press the fillet of beef over this, making sure all sticks to the meat. In a very hot, ridged pan, or on a barbecue, sear the meat until brown and slightly crisp on all sides, around 5 minutes. Remove from the pan. Allow it to rest for 5 minutes, then slice it all up as thinly as you can. Lay the slices on a large plate.

After preparing the beef, sprinkle the roasted beetroots randomly (whole, halved or quartered, depending on size) over the sliced meat. Now mix the horseradish and crème fraîche together. It has to be seasoned well, usually needing a little white wine vinegar or lemon juice. Dribble this over the beetroots. Dress some watercress with olive oil and lemon juice. Then scatter this, along with some small slivers of shaved Parmesan, all over the plate and get ready to tuck in!

Yield: 6 servings
Cook Time: 35 minutes

Prep Time: 15 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Portuguese Chocolate Tarts

5 ounce (150 gram) slab puff pastry
1 egg yolk
2 tablespoons caster sugar (superfine sugar)
Pinch allspice
A couple pinches cinnamon
1 orange, zested

For the filling:

5 1/2 fluid ounces (160 millilitres) double cream (heavy cream)
2 level tablespoons caster sugar
The smallest pinch salt
1/2 stick butter, softened
1/2 pound best-quality baking chocolate, broken up
1 1/2 fluid ounces (50 millilitres) milk
Cocoa powder, for dusting

Dust a surface with flour and roll out your pastry to a bit bigger than an 8 1/2-by-11-inch sheet of paper. Brush with the egg yolk and scatter the rest of the ingredients over, being subtle with the allspice and cinnamon. Roll the pastry up tightly like a Swiss roll to make a long sausage shape. With a knife, cut across the sausage into 1-inch (2 1/2-centimeter) pieces. Take 8 pieces aside, and freeze the rest of the pastry for a rainy day.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C/gas 6).

Turn all the pieces of pastry swirl-side up and flatten them slightly. Dust the surface of your pastry with flour, then roll each piece out into a thin circle (around the size of a teacup saucer). Even I don't have proper pastry moulds at home, so I just grease and flour the outsides of 8 of my glass tumblers. Then, I place a circle of pastry on top of each tumbler, pleating, pinching and hugging the pastry around them.

Place the tumblers on a baking tray, pastry at the top, and put in the preheated oven until crisp and golden, around 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and, while still hot, take a tea towel and pat the slightly raised top of the pastry back down on to the flat bottom of the tumbler, giving you a flat base again. Allow to cool, and carefully remove the pastry cases from around the tumblers.

Fill your pastry cases with the chocolate filling: Place the double cream, sugar, and pinch of salt in a pan and bring to the boil. As soon as the mixture has boiled, remove from the heat, and add the butter and

chocolate. Stir until it has completely melted. Allow the mixture to cool slightly, stirring in the cold milk until smooth and shiny. Sometimes this mixture looks like it has split. Allow the mixture to cool down a bit more, and whisk in a little extra cold milk until smooth. Scrape all the mixture into the cooked pastry shells. Shake to even it out and allow to cool for around 1 to 2 hours, until it is at room temperature. Dust with the cocoa powder. Ultimately the pastry should be short and crisp and the filling should be smooth and should cut like butter.

Yield: around 8 pastry cases

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 2 hours

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Roasted Sweet Garlic and Thyme Risotto with Toasted Almonds and Breadcrumbs

Don't be scared by this one, the garlic is not overpowering, it's extremely subtle and delicate combination.

*2 large heads garlic, whole and unpeeled
 Approximately 1 quart (1.1 litres) chicken stock
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 3 shallots or 2 medium onions, finely chopped
 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 1/2 head celery, finely chopped
 14 ounces (400 grams) risotto rice
 2 wine glasses dry white vermouth or dry white wine
 Sea salt
 1 good handful fresh thyme, leaves picked
 Freshly ground black pepper
 2 1/2 ounces (70 grams) butter
 4 ounces (115 grams) freshly grated Parmesan
 5 1/2 ounces (155 grams) shelled and peeled almonds, lightly crushed, cracked or chopped
 2 handfuls coarse fresh bread crumbs
 Olive oil*

For the basic risotto: Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C). Roast the whole garlic heads on a dish in the oven until soft, about 30 minutes.

Stage 1: Heat the stock. In a separate pan heat the olive oil, add the shallots or onions, garlic, and celery, and fry slowly for about 4 minutes. When the vegetables have softened, add the rice and turn up the heat.

Stage 2: The rice will now begin to fry, so keep stirring it. After a minute it will look slightly translucent. Add the vermouth or wine and keep stirring, it will smell fantastic. Any harsh alcohol flavours will evaporate and leave the rice with a tasty essence.

Stage 3: Once the vermouth or wine has cooked into the rice, add your first ladle of hot stock and a good pinch of salt. Separate the roasted garlic cloves and squeeze out the sweet insides into the risotto. Add the thyme and black pepper to the risotto. Turn down the heat to a highish simmer, so the rice doesn't cook too quickly on the outside. Keep adding ladles of stock.

Stage 4: Remove from the heat and add the butter and Parmesan. Stir gently. Place a lid on the pan and allow to sit for 2 to 3 minutes. This is the most important part of making the risotto, as this is when it becomes outrageously creamy and oozy like it should be. Eat as soon as possible while the risotto retains its perfect texture. In a frying pan toast the almonds and bread crumbs in a little olive oil until crisp and golden. Season with a little salt. Set to one side. Serve the risotto with the toasted almonds and bread crumbs sprinkled over the top. Lovely.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 50 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Beef with Soy Sauce and Ginger

2 (8 ounce/ 225 gram) sirloin steaks
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 pak choy or bok choy (even spinach or any other greens will do)
8 tablespoons soy sauce
1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled
1 chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
1/2 a garlic clove, finely grated
1 lime, juiced
Olive oil

On a very hot griddle pan, cook your seasoned piece of sirloin steak until medium or to your liking. Place in a plate and allow to rest for 2 minutes.

Now cook your greens in salted boiling water until tender.

While hot, douse with a good couple of tablespoons of soy sauce, and sprinkle with the garlic, ginger, chilli, lime juice and olive oil.

When the greens are cooked, simply divide onto two plates, thinly slice up the sirloin steaks, place on top of the greens and drizzle with any of the infused sauce left on the resting plate.

The Easiest Sexiest Salad in the World

6 ripe figs
6 slices prosciutto or Parma ham
A good handful green or purple basil
6 small balls buffalo mozzarella, torn

For the Honey and Lemon Juice Dressing:

1 tablespoon good honey
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons lemon juice
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cut a criss-cross in the figs, but not quite to the bottom, and then, using your thumb and forefinger, squeeze the base of the fig to reveal the inside.

Place the figs on a large plate and weave around 1 piece of prosciutto or Parma ham around each fig.

Add the ripped up basil and the buffalo mozzarella.

Drizzle over the honey, making sure each fig has some in the middle, then drizzle the olive oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper.

Or: Mix all the dressing ingredients together in a bowl and season, to taste, then drizzle everything with the honey and lemon juice dressing.

Yield: 6 servings

Margaritas

2 shots of tequila
1 shot Cointreau
1 shot freshly squeezed lime juice
Salt and lime wedge, to serve

Put all the ingredients into a shaker. Shake well and serve in a martini glass with a salt rim and a split lime wedge.

Salmon with Herbs in Newspaper

*A copy of The Times (London, New York, Chicago, or LA, your choice)
4 large handfuls fresh mixed herbs (dill, basil, rosemary, flat leaf parsley,
and fennel tops)*

1 (3 1/2 to 4 pound/ 1.5 kilogram) whole salmon, scaled and gutted

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Olive oil

2 lemons, thinly sliced

6 spring onions, thinly sliced

2 tablespoons fennel seeds, cracked

Open out the paper to the middle page, and scatter half the herbs over it.

Place the salmon in the middle of the paper and season inside and out and rub with olive oil.

Scatter over the lemon slices, spring onions, fennel seeds and remaining herbs, tucking some inside the fish.

Drizzle with a little extra olive oil.

Wrap the paper around the salmon, securing it well with lots of string.

Dampen the paper well under the tap. Place parcel directly on the top shelf of a preheated 425 degrees F (220 degrees C) oven, for 35 minutes, or preferably, cook on the barbecue or on a rack over a camp fire for about 25 minutes on each side.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Brunch Breads

Basic Bread Mix:

3 (1/4 ounce/7 gram) sachets dried yeast
 2.2 pounds (1 kilogram) bread flour, plus extra flour, for dusting.
 Just over 1 pint tepid water (625 millilitres)
 2 level tablespoons sea salt
 1 ounce (30 grams) sugar

Savoury Rolled Bread of Parma Ham, Egg, Cheese, Egg, and Basil:

10 slices Parma ham
 8 large organic eggs, boiled for 8 minutes and shelled
 14 ounces (400 grams) cheese (a mix of Cheddar, Parmesan, Fontina, mozzarella, or any leftovers that need to be used up), grated
 2 handfuls fresh basil
 Sun-dried tomatoes
 Extra-virgin olive oil
 Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
 Chopped fresh rosemary leaves

Sweet Rolled Bread of Chocolate, Hazelnut, and Banana:

1 jar chocolate spread
 Chopped toasted hazelnuts
 2 bananas, sliced

Basic Bread Mix: Mix all the ingredients together and knead into a dough. Cut the dough in half.

Roll one piece of dough out into a long rectangular shape about 1/2 inch (1 centimetre) thick, about 39 1/2 inches (1 meter) long and 12 to 15 inches wide.

Savoury: Along the middle of the first piece of rolled out dough, lay out your Parma ham, eggs, cheese, basil, and tomatoes. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Pull the dough over the filling so it forms what looks like a cannelloni shape.

Bring one end round to the other so that they join up. Pinch and pat the two ends together firmly to form a doughnut shaped bread. Brush on olive oil and sprinkle the loaf with a little sea salt and rosemary. Transfer to a baking tray dusted with flour and allow to proof for 15 minutes.

Place in a preheated 400 degrees F (200 degrees C) oven until golden, about 35 minutes.

Sweet: On the second piece of the rolled out dough use a palette knife to cover the surface with chocolate spread. Sprinkle some toasted chopped hazelnuts and the sliced banana onto the dough. Roll up into a cannelloni shape and then roll the long snake shape inside itself to form a snail shape. Sprinkle with chopped hazelnuts. Transfer to a baking tray dusted with flour and allow to proof for 15 minutes.

Bake in a preheated 400 degrees F (200 degrees C) for 35 minutes.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings per loaf

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Chicken Breast Baked in a Bag

2 (7 ounce/ 200 gram) skinless chicken breasts, scored
 1 egg, beaten with 2 tablespoons water
 1 handful dried porcini
 9 ounces (255 grams) mixed mushrooms (field, oyster, and shiitake),
 torn up
 1 large wineglass white wine
 2 medium potatoes, peeled, sliced and cooked
 3 large knobs (tablespoons) butter
 1 handful fresh thyme
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
 Olive oil
 Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C).

Mix the mushrooms, wine, potatoes, butter, thyme, garlic, olive oil, salt, and pepper together in a bowl; add the chicken.

Using wide aluminium foil, make a bag by folding 1 large (about 3 feet) piece in half. Brush all four edges with egg wash and fold the foil in half again, creating a double thick bag with a closed end. Fold the side edges over twice, creating two sealed edges; and leaving one side open. Place mixture into the aluminium foil bag, including all the liquid, making sure you don't pierce the foil. Close up the final edge, making sure the bag is tightly sealed and secure on all sides, and carefully slide it on to a roasting tray.

Place the tray on a high heat on the burners for 1 minute to get the heat going, then bake in the middle of the preheated oven for 25 minutes

Remove from the oven, place the bag on a big plate, take it to the table and break open the foil.

Yield: 2 servings

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Cook in Curry Sauce

5 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 teaspoons mustard seeds
1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
3 fresh green chilli's, seeds removed and thinly sliced
A handful curry leaves, ripped into small pieces
2 thumb-sized pieces ginger
3 onions, peeled and chopped
6 tomatoes, chopped
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon chilli powder
1 or 2 wineglasses water (about 10 ounces)
14 fluid ounces (400 millilitre) can coconut milk
Salt

Fish version:

4 (8-ounce/225 gram) haddock fillets, skinned and pin-boned
1 knob (1 tablespoon) tamarind paste or 1 teaspoon tamarind syrup
A very large handful baby spinach, optional

Chicken version:

4 chicken breasts, sliced into 1/2-inch (1 centimetre) strips
A few cashew nuts, toasted and crushed

Vegetarian version:

1 3/4 pounds (800 grams) mixed vegetables, chopped (potatoes, zucchini, peppers, onions, sweet potatoes, spinach, chard, cauliflower, lentils, beans)

Heat the oil in a pan when hot add the mustard seeds. Wait for them to pop, then add the fenugreek, green chilli, curry leaves, and ginger, stir and fry for a few minutes.

Using a food processor, chop the onion, add to pan, and continue to cook. When brown and soft, add the chilli powder and turmeric.

Using the same food processor, blend the tomatoes and add to the pan. Cook for a couple of minutes, add 1 or 2 wineglasses of water and the coconut milk. Simmer for about 5 minutes until it has the consistency of thick heavy cream then season carefully with salt. Take this sauce as a base.

To make the fish curry, add the fish and tamarind to the sauce and simmer for about 6 minutes. Feel free to add some baby spinach at the end of the cooking time.

For the chicken version, stir-fry the chicken strips, and cashew nuts until lightly coloured, then add the sauce and simmer for ten minutes.

For the vegetarian version simply add all the vegetables to the sauce at the beginning when you add the onions. Continue to cook as normal and simmer until tender.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Lemon Pickle

2 teaspoon mustard seeds

2 tablespoons olive oil

A small handful curry leaves, optional

1 teaspoon urad dhal/skinned and split black lentils, optional

1 teaspoon chilli powder

4 tablespoons white wine vinegar

2 medium lemons, washed, deseeded, and chopped

Fry the mustard seeds in the hot oil. As they begin to pop, add the curry leaves and urad dhal. Lower the heat and add the chilli powder; cook until brown, then add the vinegar. Stir in the lemon, remove from the heat and leave to cool. Can be stored in the refrigerator for a week.

Yield: 1/2 cup

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Chocolate Mousse with Sesame Snaps

8 ounces (200 grams) good quality dark chocolate, bashed up
2 1/2 ounces (70 grams) butter, cut into pieces
12 fluid ounces (350 millilitres) heavy cream
2 large eggs, preferably organic
2 tablespoons Scottish Heather honey
1 tablespoon Scottish whiskey
1 pound (455 grams) caster sugar
8 tablespoons butter
7 ounces (200 gram) sesame seeds

In a bowl over some gently simmering water, slowly melt the chocolate and butter together then remove from the heat.

In a separate bowl, whip the cream to soft peaks.

In a third bowl, whisk the eggs and honey until light and fluffy then fold in the whisky, melted chocolate mixture and cream, gently, so you don't lose too much air. Pour into small chilled 4 or 6 wine glasses or serving dishes and chill for at least an hour before serving.

Put your sugar and 8 tablespoons of water into a pan on medium heat. Use a spoon to stir together, it will become a syrup.

Cook until light golden, then add the sesame seeds and continue to cook until dark golden. Pour out the sesame seed caramel onto an oiled non-stick tray or oiled tin foil.

Use a palette knife to push it out to about 1/2-inch (0.5 centimetres) thick (even thinner if you can).

Allow to cool for about 15 minutes and you will have one big sesame seed caramel biscuit. Bash it up as you like!

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 1 hour

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Huge Yorkshire Puddings

1/2 pint (285 millilitres) milk
4 ounces (115 grams) all-purpose flour
Pinch salt
3 eggs
Vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

Mix the batter ingredients together. Let rest for 10 minutes

Preheat a Yorkshire pudding tray or muffin tin with 1/2-inch (1 centimetre) of oil in each section. After the 10 minutes divide the batter into the tray. Cook for around 15 to 20 minutes until crisp and puffy, don't open the oven door before then or they won't rise.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Best Roast Beef

1 (5 1/2-pound) fore-rib, wing-rib or sirloin of beef, French trimmed (2.5 kilograms)

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Olive oil

3 red onions, halved

2 bulbs garlic, plus 4 cloves garlic, peeled

7 pounds (3 kilograms) roasting potatoes, peeled

3 rosemary sprigs

2 thumb-sized pieces ginger, peeled and diced

1/2 bottle robust red wine

Yorkshire pudding, recipe follows

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C), and heat a large thick-bottomed roasting tray on the stovetop.

Rub the beef generously with salt, then add a little olive oil to the tray and lightly colour the meat for a couple of minutes on all sides.

Lay the onions and bulbs of garlic in the tray with the beef on top of them, then cook in the pre-heated oven for a total of 1 1/2 hours.

While the beef is roasting, parboil your potatoes in salted boiling water for around 10 minutes and drain in a colander. Toss about to chuff them up, this will make them really crispy.

After 30 minutes, take the tray out and toss in your potatoes and rosemary. With a garlic press or grater, squeeze or grate the cloves of garlic and ginger over everything in the tray.

Shake the tray and whack it back in the oven for the final hour. Remove the potatoes to a dish to keep warm, place the beef on a plate, covered with foil, to rest, and get your greens and Yorkshire puddings on.

Remove most of the fat from your roasting tray and you should be left with caramelized onions and sticky beef goodness.

Add 1 teaspoon of flour to the tray and mash everything together. Heat the tray on the stovetop and when hot, add the red wine. Simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring every couple of minutes, until your gravy is really tasty and coats back of a spoon. Add any juice from the beef and feel free to add some water or stock to thin the gravy if you like.

Pour through a coarse sieve and push it through with a spoon, pushing it through with a spoon, and serve in a warmed gravy jug. Serve with Yorkshire puddings.

Huge Yorkshire Puddings:

1/2 pint (285 millilitres) milk

4 ounces (115 grams) all-purpose flour

Pinch salt

3 eggs

Vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

Mix the batter ingredients together. Let rest for 10 minutes

Preheat a Yorkshire pudding tray or muffin tin with 1/2-inch (1 centimetre) of oil in each section. After the 10 minutes divide the batter into the tray. Cook for around 15 to 20 minutes until crisp and puffy, don't open the oven door before then or they won't rise.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 2 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Seared Salmon with Courgettes, Asparagus, and Rocket

4 (6 ounce/170g) salmon fillets, skinned

Extra-virgin olive oil

4 baby courgettes (zucchini), sliced lengthways

4 yellow courgettes (summer squash), roughly chopped (if not available, use green courgettes)

Pinch Maldon sea salt

2 good handfuls thin asparagus

200g (about 7 ounces) rocket (arugula)

2 lemons, halved

For the dressing:

Large handful of fresh thyme, leaves picked

Maldon sea salt

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 lemon, juiced

Season the salmon fillets and lightly drizzle them in olive oil. Season the courgettes and asparagus with salt.

Heat a griddle pan (or, ideally, use a barbecue) and, when very hot, sear the salmon and vegetables until nicely char-grilled. This should only take a few minutes on each side.

Meanwhile, make your dressing. In a pestle and mortar, bash the thyme with a pinch of salt until nicely bruised (or you can finely chop the thyme if you don't own a pestle). Pour in the olive oil and lemon juice and stir.

Remove the salmon and vegetables from the heat. Toss the vegetables with the rocket, drizzle with the dressing and serve with the salmon.

Finish off with a bit more dressing drizzled over the salmon. Serve with half a lemon. Lovely.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Pork and Crackling

If you have a good butcher, ask him for the rib or rump end of the pork loin; it's more evenly sized, making it easier to cook. Ask him to leave the skin on and to score it across with lines about 5mm/1/4 in. apart and then to take it off the bone. Ask him to chop the bones up for you and take them home to use for your gravy.

1/2 pork loin roughly 7 pounds in weight (on the bone), scored 1/4-inch apart, bone removed

Sea salt

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary

1/2 tablespoon fennel seeds

5 cloves garlic

8 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

4 bay leaves

2 tablespoons olive oil

Pork bones, chopped

5 outer sticks celery, roughly chopped

1 large carrot, roughly chopped

1 large onion, roughly chopped

Lay out your pork on a board and rub some salt and 1 teaspoon chopped rosemary into the scored lines, trying to get this into every bit by pushing and rubbing in. In a pestle and mortar smash up the fennel seeds, then the garlic and remaining chopped rosemary, and rub this into the meat - not the skin, or it will burn. Place in a large roasting tray with the balsamic vinegar, bay and olive oil. Leave for about 1/2 hour to marinate.

Meanwhile, preheat your oven to its highest temperature and brown the bones. Rub the skin of the pork with lots of sea salt - this will help puff it up and dry it out. Place the pork directly on the bars at the top of the oven. Finally add the browned bones and vegetables to the leftover balsamic marinade, add 570ml, 1 pint water and put into the oven directly under the pork. As the pork cooks all the goodness drips from it into the tray. This liquid will then become your gravy. You also get quite charred bar marks on the base of the pork.

The pork will take about 1 hour to cook. After 20 minutes turn the temperature down to 220C/425F/Gas 7. Once the pork is cooked, remove it from the oven on the rack and place on a piece of foil to save any juices. Allow to rest for at least 10 minutes. Finish off any vegetables

that you are going to serve with it and make a gravy out of the juices in the tray which was underneath the pork.

Put the bones, the liquid and the vegetables into a large pan. Add some water to the tray that contained the bones and vegetables, as there will be some Marmite-like, sticky stuff on the bottom to the tray which is very tasty. Reboil the water, scrape off all the goodness from the bottom of the tray and then pour everything into the pan. Bring to the boil, shaking occasionally, remove any oil, grease or scum from the top, then pass the contents through a sieve, discarding all the vegetables and bones. You can reduce and then correct the seasoning, to taste.

Yield: 8 servings

Baked Jerusalem Artichokes with Bread Crumbs, Thyme and Lemon

1/2 pint crème fraîche or double cream

1 lemon, juiced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 good handful fresh thyme, picked and chopped

1 to 2 handfuls grated Parmesan cheese

3 handfuls Jerusalem artichokes, peeled and sliced as thick as a pencil

2 good handfuls stale bread crumbs

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Olive oil

Preheat your oven to 230C/450F. Gas 8. In a bowl mix together your crème fraîche, lemon juice, garlic, half the thyme and most of the Parmesan, and season well to taste. Thin out with around 6 to 8 tablespoons of water and throw in the sliced Jerusalem artichokes. Mix well and place everything in an ovenproof baking dish. Cover with tin foil and bake for 35 minutes.

Mix the bread crumbs, the remaining thyme and some salt and pepper with a touch of olive oil. Remove the artichokes from the oven, discard the foil and sprinkle the remaining Parmesan over the top. Then sprinkle the flavoured bread crumbs over the Parmesan. Use up all the bread crumbs. Bake in the oven for about 15 minutes until the bread crumbs are golden. If you're in a pokey pokey kind of mood you can poke the artichokes about a bit so some of the bread crumbs fall underneath them. This makes it look more rustic instead of like a crumble.

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Marinated Feta Cheese Salad

1 pound feta cheese

Flaked dry red chilli

Dried oregano

Dried parsley

Bay leaf

Dried lemon thyme

Dried purple basil

Freshly ground black pepper

Fennel seeds

Remove the feta cheese from the pack and pat as dry as possible with kitchen towel. Press the flavours into it. Pack the cheese tightly into a jar and cover with olive oil. It will keep in the fridge for up to two months.

Tips: Don't use bought dried herbs, instead make your own by drying leftover fresh herbs on a baking sheet. Leave them somewhere warm; e.g. on top of your boiler, washing machine, or oven and they will dry within a week. Or put them in the oven at 200 to 225 degrees for 1 hour.

Uses: On a big plate, covered in fresh basil – served with lots of other salads. As a cheese course, with crusty bread and fruit Don't throw away the oil – use it in your dressing

Roasted Hamilton Poussin Wrapped with Streaky Bacon and Stuffed with Potatoes and Sage

4 poussin chickens
12 rashers dry-curled streaky bacon
1 pound potatoes, peeled
Handful fresh sage, thyme or rosemary (all are good)
12 cloves garlic, peeled
1/2 cup white wine, plus 1 cup
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Olive oil

Preheat your oven and an appropriately sized roasting tray to 425 to 450 degrees. Boil your potatoes in salted water until perfectly cooked (don't overcook). Drain and allow to cool. Remove any fat from inside the chicken cavity. Wash and pat dry with kitchen paper. Slice your potatoes thickly, season with salt and freshly ground black pepper, add your freshly torn herbs and enough olive oil just to coat. Toss over and then stuff your chickens with the potatoes. Place them into the tray with about 12 cloves of garlic and cook for 30 minutes. After this time the chicken should be looking as handsome as its inventor and the skin should be crisp and golden.

At this point lay your streaky bacon snugly over the breast meat and add a 1/2 cup of wine to the pan to get some sticky marmitey juices happening. Cook for another 15 minutes. Remove the chicken from the oven. Take them out of the tray and allow them to rest for 5 minutes while you make a quick bit of gravy. I normally remove as much fat as possible from the tray before placing on gentle heat. Splash the remaining 1 cup of white wine into it. Then boil up and scrape away all the goodness from the sides of the tray. Simmer this for a couple of minutes until tasty. It's not a thick, robust gravy, just a tasty gesture. (Another nice option at this point is to add a little cream to the gravy which works really well.) Served with something nice and green like steamed spinach and the potatoes pulled out from the chickens.

Prep Time: 50 minutes
 Cook Time: 1 hour

Spiced Cherry Tomato Chutney

1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
2 to 4 small red chillies, crumbled
Large pinch coriander seeds, pounded
2 cloves, pounded
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg, pounded
Small pinch cumin, pounded
Olive oil
4 anchovy fillets
3 ounces ripe red cherry tomatoes, washed, whole
1 pound 4 ounces brown sugar
8 good lugs vinegar (preferably red wine)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Slowly fry the onions, garlic and spices in a little olive oil soft and translucent. Add the anchovies and cherry tomatoes (which you can blanch and remove the skins first if you like.) Shake around and add the sugar, vinegar and salt and pepper at this point. Bring to the boil, stir and simmer gently for 30 minutes before seasoning well to taste and transfer to a few small, sterilized airtight jars, rather than a large one, and seal. If unopened, the chutney will improve in flavour and last up to a year in your cupboard. Once opened, keep in your refrigerator for 1 to 2 months.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 55 minutes

Salted Preserved Lemons

This is a Moroccan recipe.

Fennel seeds

Coriander seeds

Cinnamon stick

Peppercorns

Bay Leaf

Sea salt

Large fat Lemons (preferably Sicilian ones with the leaves still attached)

In a bowl mix the spices into the sea salt. Cut a cross into the lemons – almost to the base, but so that the quarters stay together. Push the seasoned salt into the lemon segments and pack the lemons as tightly as possible into an airtight jar. The less space there is between the lemons the more attractive it will look and you won't need to use so much salt. The lemons will be ready after one month of preserving, and will last for about 2 years.

Tips: The peel is edible This also works very well with limes You could preserve oranges like this too – but there are not so many recipes which use them You must use sea salt not table salt – table salt is too chemical and harsh

Uses: For seasoning rice and couscous – it works like salt and makes the rice and couscous lemon scented Put chicken/fish into a foil bag and bake with the lemon salt Use to season stews and soups

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 99 hours

Chunky Coconut, Tomato, Cucumber and Lime Relish

This is a really nice fresh salad/relish and is very simple to make. It goes especially well with Fragrant Green Chicken Curry.

16 cherry tomatoes, quartered or roughly chopped

1/2 fresh coconut, grated or shaved

1 small handful of basil, or coriander, roughly chopped

6 inches cucumber, skinned, seeds removed and roughly chopped

1 thinly sliced red chilli (optional)

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 or 2 limes, juiced

Put the tomatoes, coconut, basil, cucumbers and chilli, if using, into a bowl and toss. Just before serving, toss in the olive oil, salt, pepper and lime juice to taste.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 12 minutes

Cook Time:

Fragrant Green Chicken Curry

I was asked to make this by my sister's husband, who'd eaten something similar in a Thai restaurant. I looked up a lot of recipes and they all seemed quite different, so I used them as a basis and added some more fresh herbs, trying to get it as fragrant as possible. If you are a veggie, replace the chicken with vegetables of your choice.

Green Curry Paste:

*6 spring onions, washed and trimmed
4 to 6 medium green chilli's, seeded and finely chopped
2 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon fresh ginger root, peeled and finely chopped
1 tablespoon coriander seeds, pounded and crushed
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 handful lime leaves, torn
2 lemon grass stalks, trimmed back and finely chopped
2 good handfuls fresh basil on the stalk
3 good handfuls fresh coriander on the stalk
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 limes, zested and juiced*

*4 chicken breasts without bone and skin, each cut into 5 large pieces
16 ounces coconut milk
1 handful chopped pistachio nuts*

Put all the green curry paste ingredients in a food processor and whizz to a smooth green paste. Marinate the chicken in a little of the paste for 30 minutes, then add a little oil and the chicken pieces to a hot casserole-type pan or wok. Fry for 4 minutes, then add the remainder of the marinade – it will sizzle and spit. Stir in the coconut milk, bring to the boil and simmer gently for 8 minutes until the chicken is cooked. Season to taste. The flavour should have a kick but be reasonably mellow – very fresh and fragrant.

Sprinkle with the pistachios and some coriander leaves and serve with steamed rice or noodles, and chunky coconut, tomato, cucumber and lime relish.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 45 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Vegetable Tempura

Tempura batter is very handy and easy to make. You can use it with just about any vegetable, as long as they are cut thin enough so that the vegetable can just cook and soften in the same time as it takes for the batter to crisp. These can be eaten alone as a starter with a good sprinkle of rock salt, halves of lemon or lime and possibly some of the dips. The battered vegetables also make a nice side dish, especially with simply cooked meat or fish and a salad.

7 ounces plain flour

3 1/2 ounces corn flour

Ice-cold water, preferably soda or sparkling

3 pounds of assorted vegetables (see below)

Add all the flour to a bowl. With the handle of a spoon, or a chopstick, mix, and stir in the ice-cold water until the mixture is slightly thicker than buttermilk consistency. Make a point of not mixing thoroughly, as tempura is renowned for lumps of flour.

Dip sliced vegetables (zucchini, onions, eggplants, carrots, bell peppers, sweet potatoes, string beans, broccoli, wild mushrooms, fresh herbs, and bok choy) any vegetables will work but these are the most commonly used) into the batter mixture and shake off any excess.

Deep fry vegetables in a wok or deep fat fryer (you can use a frying pan if you do not have anything else, you just need about 7cm/3 inches of clean oil) at 200C/400F/Gas 6 until the batter is light golden in colour and crisp. (Any large amounts of hot oil in a kitchen, especially in woks which are not always that sturdy, scare me, please be careful and do not leave the pan unattended.) Turn the vegetables at intervals to ensure that both sides are cooked equally and then fish them out with a slotted spoon, shaking off any excess oil. Place them on kitchen paper towels and eat as soon as possible. The reason that I keep going on about eating them so quickly is because as your hot cooked vegetables cool down inside the batter they begin to steam, making them less crisp as time goes on. Good tempura should be crispy and is one of those things that should be made and cooked quickly and eaten straight away.

Tempura Dipping Sauce:

1 cup rice wine vinegar

2 tablespoons sugar

1/2 handful cilantro, chopped

1 small chilli, seeded and finely chopped

1/2 teaspoon chopped garlic
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pour the rice wine vinegar into a small bowl. Add the sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Taste for sweetness. Add cilantro, chilli, and garlic and mix well. Season with salt and pepper and allow to sit for 10 minutes to 1 hour, for flavours to combine.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 25 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Praline Semi-Freddo

This is one of my favourites, roasted hazelnuts in caramel, just superb! To make the caramel successfully, it needs your undivided attention for about 10 minutes. You can't leave it for a moment, and do be careful with the kids around – caramel burns are some of the worst kind, no joke! I've never burnt myself on caramel and nor should you, just use your head and resist the temptation to taste it at any time.

*1 vanilla bean
1/4 cup sugar
4 large fresh eggs, separated
2 cups plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
Salt
1 recipe Praline (see below)*

Remove the seeds from the vanilla bean by scoring down the length and scraping the seeds out of each half.

Whisk the vanilla seeds and sugar with the egg yolks in a large bowl until pale. In a second bowl whisk the cream until soft peaks form. (Important! Please don't overwhip it.) Then in the third bowl whisk or beat the egg whites with an electric mixer with a pinch of salt until they form very firm peaks (this is when you can pull the egg whites in any direction and they will stay like it).

At this point add the praline, the cream and egg whites, to the egg yolk mixture. Gently fold in.

Immediately scoop the contents into your chosen container. Cover with plastic wrap and freeze until you're ready to eat it.

Praline:

*11 ounces peeled hazelnuts
7 ounces sugar
4 tablespoons water*

Roast the hazelnuts in the oven at 225C/425F/Gas 7 until golden (about 4 minutes). Really watch them, because if you over-roast them they go bitter and you can't use them.

Put the sugar and water in a thick-bottomed pan and place on a medium to high heat. The mixture will start to bubble and then turn into a clear syrup.

To begin with, it will gradually start to colour in parts or from the sides. Gently and carefully shake the pan, just moving it to mix the patches of colour.

When it's all golden brown, carefully tip it away from you and gently add the nuts. Turn the heat down to a simmer and gently stir to coat the nuts in caramel.

When the caramel is dark golden brown, turn it out on to a clean, lightly oiled tray, or on to greaseproof paper on a surface that won't burn. It will cool to a flattish solid sheet.

When completely cooled (which takes about 20 minutes), smash it up roughly and pulse it in a food processor until the pieces are still quite chunky (very approximate size about 1/2 cm/ 1/4-inch).

Remove about half the praline, then pulse the rest to a powder (or put it in a tea-towel and bash with a rolling-pin), and add both lots of praline to the semi-freddo mixture.

Yield: Serves 12

Chocolate Fridge Cake

5 1/4 ounces (150 grams) digestive biscuits
3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) pecans
3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) pistachio nuts
10 glace cherries
2 ready made meringue nests, crumbled into small pieces
5 1/4 ounces (150 grams) butter
1 tablespoon golden syrup
7 ounces (200 grams) good quality chocolate
Cocoa powder, for dusting

Break the biscuits into small pieces directly into a large bowl. Add the pecans, pistachio nuts, cherries and bits of meringue. Put the rest of the ingredients, except the cocoa powder, into a bowl and put over a pan of simmering water on low heat to melt.

Mix the ingredients together and place in the container which acts as your mould. To help with turning out, line a 12 by 8-inch (30 by 20 centimetre) container with cling film, first leaving plenty of extra film at the edges to fold over the top.

Leave in the refrigerator to firm up then turn out and cut into chunky slices. This cake can be kept in an airtight container and actually improves after a couple of days.

Yield: 4 servings
Prep Time: 5 minutes
Inactive Prep Time: 2 hours
Cook Time: 15 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Jools



Jools' Bolognaise Sauce.

1lb/450g best minced beef
 8 rashers of smoked bacon sliced and chopped
 1 large onion, chopped
 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
 Level teaspoon salt
 Glass of red wine
 Teaspoon dried oregano
 Tin of tomatoes
 Large tube or half a tin of tomato puree (I use loads!)
 Black pepper
 Olive oil
 Handful fresh basil

In a large pan, fry off the minced beef, bacon, onion and garlic in a tablespoon of olive oil. Add the wine and reduce to nothing, add the oregano, tinned tomatoes and tomato puree. I think that the tomato puree is important for flavour and it thickens the sauce. Add the salt and some freshly ground black pepper, bring it to the boil and simmer gently for a couple of hours. Add some ripped up fresh basil just before serving.

Serve the sauce with pasta and Parmesan cheese or nice strong grated cheddar. A green salad is nice with this.

KIDS RECIPES**Spaghetti with Red Onions, Sun Dried Tomatoes, Balsamic Vinegar and Basil**

Serves 4

455g/1lb dried spaghetti, the best you can get

1 red onion, peeled and finely chopped

Olive oil

2 handfuls of sun-dried tomatoes in oil, chopped

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 handfuls of basil, torn

1small handful of Parmesan or pecorino cheese, grated

While cooking the Spaghetti in plenty of salted boiling water until al dente, slowly fry the onion in a couple of lugs of olive oil, for 5 minutes until soft and tender. Stir in the drained tomatoes and vinegar, and throw in your drained pasta. Season and toss together with the basil, serve with grated Parmesan or Pecorino.

Party Cake



3 rounded tablespoons cocoa powder
 200g/7oz caster sugar
 200g/7oz butter
 3 large eggs, preferably free range
 200g/7oz self raising flour, sifted
 1 rounded teaspoon baking powder
 200ml/7fl oz double cream
 1 large handful raspberries
 1 large handful strawberries

Chocolate Topping

100g/3 ¾ oz butter
 100g/3 ¾ oz best cooking chocolate
 100g /3 ¾ oz icing sugar
 3 tablespoons milk

Preheat the oven to 180°C/ 350°F Gas 4. Line the bases of 2x20cm / 8inch cake tins with greased proof paper. Mix the cocoa powder with 4 tablespoons of boiling water until smooth. In a separate bowl, beat the sugar and butter until fluffy, add the cocoa mixture, eggs, flour and baking powder. Mix well fold in the nuts. Divide the mixture between the tins. Bake for about 25mins. When cooked, allow to cool then remove from the tins.

Melt the chocolate topping ingredients in a bowl over some lightly simmering water. Stir until blended well and allow to cool. Whip the double cream to soft peaks and sweeten with a little sugar to taste. To assemble the cake, remove the greaseproof paper from both sponges. Drizzle each one with a little Sherry if you like. Spread the cream over one of the sponges, then sprinkle the fruit on top. Sandwich the second sponge on top and press down. Run a knife around the edge of the cake to smooth it off and drizzle over your chocolate topping. Happy Days, you've done it! But allow the chocolate topping to firm up slightly before tucking in.

Orange and Polenta Biscuits

Makes around 25

170g/6oz butter

170g/6oz sugar

255g/9oz polenta

100g/ 3 ¾ oz plain flour

Zest of 2-3 oranges, finely chopped

2 large eggs

Rub the butter, sugar, polenta and flour together before mixing in the orange zest and the eggs. Cover with cling film and put in the fridge for an hour until slightly firm. Place a large square of greaseproof paper on a baking tray and spoon small teaspoons of the mixture in lines 5cm/2" apart. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 190°C/375°F/Gas5 for around 5-6 minutes until the outside edges of your biscuits are lightly golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 15 minutes before eating.

Banana and Honey Smoothie



Serves 2 people

I did this for my cousins for a treat, I also added a little peanut butter ~ mad! ~ but they liked it. They didn't have a liquidiser so I mashed up the banana then I wrapped up the ice in a tea towel and bashed it with a rolling pin. Then you can mix all the ingredients together in a jug or bowl. Not a bad job!

Serves 2.

3 bananas.

3 dessert spoons of honey.

285ml / ½ a pint of single cream.

Around a pint of ice cubes.

Place the banana, cream and honey in the liquidiser and whizz up for 30 seconds before adding the ice cubes, place the lid on and pulse to a slushy milk shake consistency.

End of Kids Recipes

The King of Puddings

4 eggs

1 pint (565 millilitres) milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

4 ounces (115 grams) fine bread crumbs

8 ounces (225 grams) sugar

4 level tablespoons jam (raspberry jam is really nice)

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C).

Separate 3 of the eggs. Put the yolks in a bowl with the remaining whole egg and beat together. Add the milk, vanilla essence, bread crumbs, and 3 ounces (85 grams) of the sugar.

Put the jam on the bottom of a pie dish and spread it evenly. Pour the egg and milk mixture over the jam.

Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour or until set.

Whisk the remaining egg whites until stiff. You could use an electric whisk for this. Slowly add the remaining sugar until it is all mixed in. Pile this mixture on top of the pudding mixture, then bake in the oven for a further 15 to 20 minutes until the meringue is set and lightly browned.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Slow Roasted Duck

2 (3 1/2 pound) Aylesbury ducks (1.5 kilograms) (can substitute Peking ducks)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

9 ounces (255 grams) fresh ginger

2 long stalks baby rhubarb

2 handfuls fresh sage

1 bulb garlic, cloves removed and chopped in half

2 red onions, roughly sliced

2 wineglasses Marsala or Vin Santo

1 cup (285 millilitres) vegetable, chicken, or duck stock

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C).

Season the ducks generously, putting some salt in the cavity as well. Make sure you save the fat and the giblets for the gravy.

Coarsely grate half the ginger and rhubarb. Mix this in a bowl with half the sage and all the garlic and onion, and stuff the mixture inside the cavity of the ducks, ensuring there is an air cavity.

Place the ducks on a tray on top of the chopped up giblets and roast in the oven for one hour. Turn the temperature down to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C) and cook for another 1 1/2 hours until crisp and tender. The ducks are ready when the skin is crisp and the leg bones can be easily removed.

During this time you will need to drain the fat maybe 3 times into a bowl, this will separate into a clear fat which you can keep for roasting.

Once cooked allow the ducks to rest on a warmed plate while you make the sauce. Drain off any remaining fat from the roasting tray.

Pull out all the stuffing and any juices from the inside of the duck and put in the roasting tray and warm this on a low heat.

Add the Marsala and loosen all the sticky goodness from the bottom of the tray, and reduce. Add the stock and reduce to a good taste and consistency.

Pass the sauce through a coarse sieve.

Remove the breasts from the ducks with a knife and, using your hands, remove the thighs. Arrange the breasts and thighs on a large serving plate.

Finely slice the remaining ginger and fry off in a little hot oil (or you can use the duck fat) in a non-stick pan. As the ginger begins to colour, add the rest of the rhubarb, finely sliced, and the rest of the sage. Fry until crisp. Sprinkle this over the duck and drizzle with the sauce.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 2 hours 50 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Chocolate Cambridge Cream

3 vanilla pods

7 fluid ounces (200 millilitres) milk

13 fluid ounces (375 millilitres) double cream

8 large egg yolks, preferably organic

2 1/2 ounces (70 grams) caster sugar

1 heaped teaspoon cocoa powder

3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) good-quality chocolate, bashed up finely

Extra sugar, for caramelizing

Run a knife along the length of the vanilla pods, scraping out the seeds, and then chop up the pods. Put the seeds and pods in to a thick-bottomed pan with the milk and cream. Simmer slowly for 5 minutes for the flavour to infuse.

In a bowl that will fit into the top of the pan, but not fall into the pan, whisk the egg yolks, sugar, and cocoa powder for a minute. Still slowly whisking, add the vanilla-flavoured milk and cream and keep whisking until well mixed.

Add 1-inch (2.5 centimetres) of hot water to the dirty pan bring to a simmer and put the bowl on top of the pan. Cook the custard slowly over the simmering water for 5 minutes, stirring often until it coats the back of the spoon.

Strain the custard through a fine sieve into a clean container. Discard the vanilla pods.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C).

Put 4 ovenproof serving dishes in a high-sided roasting tray. Divide the chocolate between them and shake flat. Carefully divide the custard mix between the dishes; making sure the chocolate isn't disturbed. Fill the tray with water until it is halfway up the sides of the dishes.

Cook in the preheated oven for around 30 to 45 minutes until slightly wobbly in the middle. Allow to cool, then sprinkle with some sugar, and caramelize with a blowtorch.

Propane Gas Torch Warning: Propane gas torches are highly flammable and should be kept away from heat or flame, and should not be exposed to prolonged sunlight. Propane gas torches should only be used in well-ventilated areas. When lighting a propane gas torch, place the torch on a flat, steady surface, facing away from you. Light the match or lighter and then open the gas valve. Light the gas jet, and blow out the match.

Always turn off the burner valve to "finger tight" when finished using the torch. Children should never use a propane gas torch without adult supervision.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 55 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Marinated Lamb

1 leg lamb, boned
1 large bunch mint, roughly chopped
1 large bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled
17 1/2 ounces (500 grams) natural yoghurt
1/2 (14-ounce/400 gram) can chickpeas, drained and mashed
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 lemon, juiced

Tray Roasted Vegetables:

Baby carrots
Quartered fennel, with its own leafy tops
Quartered red onions
Whole baby turnips
Butternut squash, cut into chunks
Jerusalem artichokes, scrubbed and halved
1/2 (14-ounce/400 gram) can chick peas, drained
Ground cumin
Coriander seeds
Nutmeg
Olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Lamb: Pre-heat the oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C).

Bash up the coriander and mint and mix with the yoghurt, garlic, and seasoning. Reserve half to use as a sauce once the lamb is cooked.

Score the lamb pieces, season with the salt and pepper and mix with half the marinade and the chickpeas, so it is all coated.

Transfer the marinade and lamb to a plastic bag and seal. Place in the refrigerator until required.

To cook, place the meat directly on the oven shelf above the tray of vegetables for approximately 45 minutes.

Vegetables: Pre-heat the oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C). Place all the vegetables in a roasting tray, add the chickpeas, cumin, coriander seeds, nutmeg, sea salt, pepper, and olive oil and toss together.

Cook in the preheated oven for 20 minutes then remove the foil and continue roasting for 20 to 30 minutes until the vegetables are tender and golden.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 1 to 24 hours

Cook Time: 50 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

My Favourite Way of Dressing Oysters

Oysters with Shallots and Red Wine Vinegar:

1 to 2 shallots, finely chopped

2 teaspoons sugar

5 tablespoons red wine vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Mix ingredients together in a small serving dish. Leave for 10 minutes and taste. Add more sugar if required.

Oysters with Chile, Ginger, and Rice Wine Vinegar:

A half thumb-sized piece peeled ginger, finely grated

6 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

1 red chilli, seeded and finely chopped

A little finely sliced cilantro leaves

1 teaspoon sugar

Seaweed, as a garnish

Halved lemons, as an accompaniment

Mix together all the ingredients in the serving dish. Taste and add sugar if required. Serve with the oysters.

Serve on some crushed on a round tray with seaweed and 1/2 lemons.

Yield: 2 dozen oysters

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time:

Difficulty: Easy

Summer Fruit and Prosecco Jelly

8 pints mixed soft fruit (blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, red currants)

4 leaves gelatine

1/2 cup (140 grams) elderflower cordial

1 1/2 cups (425 millilitres) Prosecco (sparkling Italian wine), chilled

2 heaping tablespoons caster sugar

Divide the ripe fruit into 9 small glasses. Place all the glasses on a tray and chill in the refrigerator.

Soak the gelatine leaves in some cold water for a minute, then drain, and add the gelatine back to the bowl with the cordial. Rest above a pan of water over a medium heat and stir constantly until the gelatine and cordial become syrupy.

At this point you can add sugar, stir until dissolved, then remove the bowl from the heat, and let it sit at room temperature for a minute or two.

Remove the chilled Prosecco and chilled fruit from the refrigerator. The idea being that the fruit moulds and Prosecco are all chilled, so the bubbles stay in the jelly when it sets and they fizz in your mouth when you eat it.

Pour the Prosecco into the cordial mix, then divide between the glasses over your fruit. Some of the fruit might rise to the top, so using your finger, just push the fruit down into the jelly mix so that it is sealed and will then keep well in the refrigerator.

Place in the refrigerator for an hour to set.

To serve, dip the glass in to a bowl of hot water to loosen the outside of the jelly, then turn it out onto a plate.

Yield: 9 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 1 hour

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Pine Nut and Honey Tart

For the pastry:

4 ounces (115 grams) butter

3 1/2 ounces (100 grams) confectioners' sugar

Pinch salt

8 ounces (225 grams) all-purpose flour

2 egg yolks

2 tablespoons cold milk or water

9 ounces (225 grams) pine nuts

9 ounces (225 grams) butter

9 ounces (225 grams) caster sugar

3 large eggs, preferably organic

4 tablespoons Greek fig tree honey

4 ounces (115 grams) all-purpose flour

1 orange, zested

Lemon thyme, leaves picked, plus extra, for garnish

Pinch salt

Serving suggestions: caramelised figs and crème fraîche

You can make the pastry by hand or in the food processor. Cream together the butter, sugar, and salt and then rub or pulse in the flour and egg yolks. When the mixture has come together, looking like coarse breadcrumbs, add the milk or water. Gently pat together to form a small ball of dough. Wrap and let rest for an hour.

Carefully cut thin slices of the pastry (or you can roll out if you prefer) and place in and around the bottom and sides of a 12-inch (30-centimeter) tart pan. Push the pastry together and level out and tidy up the sides. Cover and let to rest in the freezer for about 1 hour.

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C), and bake the pastry for around 15 minutes until lightly golden. Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees F (170 degrees C).

While the pastry is in the oven, toast the pine nuts under the grill.

Using a spatula, or a food processor, whip the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.

Stir in your pine nuts, add the eggs 1 at a time, and then fold in the honey, flour, thyme, orange zest, and salt. Spoon into the tart shell and bake for 30 to 35 minutes.

Add a few uncooked pine nuts to the top of the mixture for decoration.

Serve with caramelized figs (grilled with a little sugar), crème fraîche and a little lemon thyme.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 2 hours

Cook Time: 50 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Chilli con Carne

2 medium onions

1 clove garlic

Olive oil

2 level teaspoons chilli powder

1 heaped teaspoon ground cumin (or crushed cumin seeds)

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 pound (455 grams) chuck, minced or ground

7 ounces (200 grams) sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil

1 fresh red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

2 (14 ounce) cans chopped tomatoes (400 grams)

1/2 stick cinnamon

5 ounces water

2 (14 ounce) cans red kidney beans, drained (400 grams)

If you are going to use the oven method, preheat the oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C).

Chop up the onions and garlic in the food processor and fry in some olive oil until softened. Add the chilli powder and cumin and a little seasoning.

Chop up the meat in the processor and add to the pan, cooking it until slightly browned.

Place the sun-dried tomatoes and chilli in the processor with the oil and blend to form a paste. Add these to the beef with the tomatoes, cinnamon stick, and a wineglass of water. Season a little more, if need be.

Bring to the boil, cover with greaseproof paper and a lid, then either turn the heat down to simmer and cook for 1 1/2 hours or transfer the pan to the oven for about 1 1/2 hours.

Add the red kidney beans 30 minutes before the end of cooking time.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 50 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

The Best Pasta Salad

11 ounces (310 grams) small shell-shaped pasta

3 cloves garlic

9 ounces (225 grams) yellow cherry tomatoes

9 ounces (225 grams) red cherry tomatoes

1/2 cucumber

1 handful black olives, pitted

2 tablespoons fresh chives

1 handful fresh basil

7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

4 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil, add the pasta and garlic, and simmer for about 5 minutes or until al dente, and drain.

Put the garlic to one side for the dressing. Put the pasta in a bowl.

Cut the tomatoes, cucumber, and black olives into small pieces, about half the size of the pasta, and place in the round metal container.

Roughly chop the herbs and place these in the container.

Using a fork mash the cooked garlic cloves on the board with a little salt, add to the salad.

Add the oil, vinegar, and seasoning.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

The Best Hot Chocolate

This a great way to make the best hot chocolate, cappuccino or frothy milk drinks at home without having to buy any expensive machinery. All you need is a good-sized thermos flask or a plastic jug with a screw-top lid. I've even made pukka ovaltine like this!

This takes around 3 or 4 minutes to make.

1 pint milk

2 tablespoons the best hot chocolate powder

A handful of marshmallows

Firstly, put a pan of milk on to the heat. Bring to a simmer, not a boil, and while it's heating, put a tablespoon of chocolate powder into each mug. Add a little warmish milk from the pan to each mug, you just need enough to dissolve the chocolate powder.

At this point, plonk a few marshmallows into each mug. When the milk is at a simmer, carefully pour it into a plastic jug or flask. I normally do this over a sink as I always end up spilling a bit (the trick is to have a big enough jug or flask so the milk only half fills it: you need the extra space for shaking and frothing).

Screw the lid on tightly, place a cloth over the lid for safety, and shake hard for a minute. Remove the lid, minding the steam, and pour into your mugs. A little stir and you can slurp your way to heaven!

Yield: 2 serving

Prep Time: 1 minute

Cook Time: 4 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Sushi Rolls

14 ounces (400milliliters) sushi rice
16 ounces (450milliliters) water
6 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons salt
1 pack of nori seaweed sheets, halved
Pickled ginger
Wasabi
Soy sauce

For the fillings:

Spring onions
Enoki mushrooms
Raw salmon
Raw tuna
Cucumber

Wash the rice well and drain. Cover with the measured water and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook for 12 minutes then leave to sit for 5 minutes with the lid on.

Meanwhile, heat the vinegar, sugar, and salt until dissolved then leave to cool. Turn the cooked rice out onto a flat tray to cool. When cool, place in a bowl, stir in the vinegar solution, and mix with a wooden spoon.

Lay half a sheet of nori seaweed onto a rolling mat. Dip your hand in cold water and quickly place a handful of rice in a line along the seaweed. Flatten out with your fingertips using the water to stop any sticking. The key is to do this quickly. The rice should cover half the width of the sheet so now you can place your combo of filling in the middle of the rice. Use the mat to roll up the sushi roll, pinch and squeeze the mat to shape it into a round cigar shape. Practice makes perfect!

Slice into inch-thick rolls with a sharp knife, turn onto their sides so the rice is facing upwards, and serve with the pickled ginger and wasabi mixed with soy sauce.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings
 Prep Time: 10 minutes
 Cook Time: 50 minutes
 Difficulty: Medium

Pizza

2 pounds, 3 ounces (1 kilogram) strong bread flour

1 ounce (30 grams) sugar

1 ounce (30 grams) salt

1 ounce dried yeast

1 pint (565 millilitres) tepid water

2 tablespoons olive oil

Toppings, recipes follow

Put the flour onto a work surface or use a bowl, if you are short of space. Using your fingers, make a big well in the middle of the flour. Add the sugar, salt and yeast then pour in the tepid water and olive oil. Using a fork, make circular movements from the centre moving outwards, slowly bringing in more of the flour until all the yeast mixture is soaked up. This should be starting to look like dough now so you can start to work and knead it until it is smooth. This should take around 4 minutes. Roll out to a sausage shape and divide into 8 or 10 balls, depending on how large you want the pizzas to be.

Flour the surface and roll each pizza out to about the thickness of 3 beer coasters (1/3 of an inch). They don't have to be perfectly round, they should look home-made. Place each pizza on a lightly oiled and floured piece of tin foil. Flour the top of the pizza, placing another on top of it. Flour that and repeat this until all the pizzas are stacked together. These can be frozen for a couple of months, placed in the fridge for 10 hours, or cooked straight away. Lightly top with your chosen topping (the simpler the better) and bake directly on the oven bars for 10 minutes at your oven's highest temperature.

Toppings:

Tomato:

8 plum tomatoes

Sprinkle dried oregano

Drizzle olive oil

For enough to cover eight bases, chop and de-seed plum tomatoes, dry with kitchen paper, sprinkle with a little dried oregano and a drizzle of olive oil.

Various topping ingredients:

Sliced mozzarella

Rocket (Arugula)

Parmesan

Olives

Sun-dried tomatoes

Artichoke hearts

Prosciutto

Panchetta

Any interesting cheeses - use your imagination

Yield: 8 (10-inch) pizzas, 16 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 10 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Pancakes

These American pancakes are great! Instead of being thin and silky like French crepes they are wonderfully fluffy and thick and can be made to perfection straight away. Simple, simple, simple - my Jools goes mad for them!

*3 large eggs
1 cup flour (122 grams)
1 heaped teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup milk (110 millilitres)
Pinch salt*

First, separate the eggs, putting the whites in 1 bowl and the egg yolks into another. Add the flour, baking powder and milk to the egg yolks and mix to a smooth thick batter. Whisk the whites with the salt until they form stiff peaks. Fold into the batter - it is now ready to use.

Heat a non-stick pan on a medium heat. Pour a little oil onto some kitchen paper and spread onto the pan. Pour some of your batter into the pan and fry for a couple of minutes until it starts to look golden and firm. At this point, sprinkle your chosen flavouring onto the uncooked side before loosening with a spatula and flipping the pancake over. Continue frying until both sides are golden.

You can make these pancakes large or small, to your liking. You can serve them simply dowsed in maple syrup and even some butter or crème fraiche. Or try one of these great flavorings. Nice one.

Optional Toppings:

Corn on the cob

Bacon or pancetta

Blueberries

Bananas

Stewed apples

Chocolate

Maple syrup

Anything else you can imagine...

P.S. You must try the corn pancakes, they are great. On one condition: you must use fresh corn. To do this, remove the outer leaves, and carefully run a knife down the cob, this will loosen all the lovely pieces of corn. I like to have some grilled bacon over my corn pancakes, drizzled with a little maple syrup. This sounds bloody horrid but it honestly tastes pukka!

Yield: 4 UK servings, 2 US servings, 8 pancakes total

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Mussels and Sweet Leeks

This dish is a really sociable thing. Just whack it in a big bowl and get your friends to dive in. Have a loaf of crusty bread with it and you have a tasty meal that is completely simple.

3 medium leeks, cleaned and roughly chopped

3 cloves garlic, finely sliced

Olive oil

2 knobs (tablespoons) butter

1/2 glass (about 3 ounces) Marsala, sherry, or white wine

1/4 pint (140 millilitres) cream

2 1/2 pounds (1.1kilograms) mussels, cleaned and de-bearded

A good handful of parsley, roughly chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a large pan, slowly fry the leeks and garlic in a good lug of olive oil and the butter. After 5 minutes, they should be very soft and sweet to taste. Pour in the alcohol, turn the heat up, and simmer for 1 minute until the alcohol smell disappears, leaving you with the fantastic essence.

Then add the cream, bring back to the boil, and add all the mussels. Simply boil with a lid on until all the mussels have opened, discard any that remain closed.

To make life easier, you could make the sauce in advance and keep it in the refrigerator until you need to cook the mussels. This is kind of handy if you are having a party as you'll have more time to chill out with a drink.

When the mussels are cooked, stir in the parsley and correct the seasoning. Serve in a large bowl with some crusty bread.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Christmas Bombe

This is an excellent Christmas special that is very simple and great to get in the bag as you can make it days before the big day.

For the chocolate sponge:

7 ounces (200grams) butter

7 ounces (200grams) caster sugar

3 large eggs

7 ounces (200grams) self-rising flour

1 rounded teaspoon baking powder

3 rounded tablespoons cocoa powder

For the filling:

2 (250 gram containers) ricotta cheese (about 19 ounces)

Around 2 3/4 ounces (80 grams) sugar

1 handful of mixed glace fruit

1 tin cherries, drained

4 ounces (100 grams) chocolate, broken up

1 handful flaked or shaved or thinly sliced almonds

2 heaping tablespoons good coffee beans, crushed

2 egg whites

A good drizzle orange liqueur

Cocoa powder for dusting

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Line 2 (10-inch) (25 centimetres) cake tins with greaseproof paper and rub with a little butter. In a mixer, beat the butter and sugar together until fluffy. Add the eggs, flour, baking powder, and cocoa powder. Mix well and divide into the cake tins. Cook for 7 to 8 minutes at 350 degrees F (180 degrees C/gas 4) until firm but soft.

So, you have 7 to 8 minutes, while the sponge is cooking, to make the filling. Add the ricotta to a food processor and blitz with the sugar until shiny and smooth. Scoop into a bowl, add the chopped fruit, cherries, chocolate, and almonds and stir together. Now add the coffee to taste (bash the hell out of the beans using something heavy wrapped in a tea towel, or use a coffee grinder if you don't like too much noise-). Whip up the egg whites and fold into the ricotta mix.

By now, the sponge is probably ready. Turn it out while it is still hot and cut it into 8 wedges. Line a shallow round bowl, about 9-inches (23 centimetres) across, with two sheets of cling film, making sure it fits the

shape of the bowl. Then fit half of the sponge pieces neatly around the insides of the bowl (as you would if you were making summer pudding).

Drizzle with liqueur, then pour in the ricotta mixture. Level it out, then place the remaining sponge over the top. Drizzle again with liqueur. Pull the cling film over the top and weigh it down with some plates, pushing down on them before placing in the freezer for at least 4 hours. Serve this 'semi freddo' (semi frozen), dusted with cocoa powder and sliced into wedges. If it's very frozen then that's fine; just pull it out of the fridge when dinner is served so it can slowly thaw as you are eating.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 4 hours

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Broken Potatoes

2 pounds, 3 ounces (1-kilogram) potatoes, peeled

Olive oil

Pork fat

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

A handful of rosemary leaves

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Cook the potatoes in salted boiling water for about 15 minutes, or until your knife slides easily through them. Drain and leave for 5 minutes.

Drizzle a roasting tray with a little olive oil and any handy pork fat.

Season, then throw in the potatoes, and push down on each of them to break them up slightly. Then pound up the rosemary in a pestle and mortar to bruise and release its flavours. Add 4 good lugs of olive oil, stir around, and drizzle over the potatoes. Roast for 40 to 50 minutes at 425 degrees F (220 degrees C/gas 7) until crisp and golden.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 10 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Pork with Peaches

This fruit and meat combo is great. Give it a bash as it makes a really good change to plain old roast pork.

1 (3 1/2 pound) (1 1/2 kilogram) pork loin, boned

1 bunch fresh thyme, leaves picked

1 bulb garlic

7 ounces (200 grams) butter

2 tins (cans) peaches in natural juice, drained

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Around 15 slices of pancetta, streaky bacon, or Parma ham

1 glass (about 6 ounces) white wine

A little flour

1 glass (about 6 ounces) water

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C/gas 7).

Score the skin of the pork through the fat, the incisions should be about 1 centimetre apart. Turn over. Make a pocket for the stuffing by cutting an incision at an angle, about 3 inches (7.5 centimetres) deep in the centre of the streaky part of the loin, working away from the eye meat. Starting slightly in from the side of the meat, slowly slice along the loin not quite to the end, this will ensure your stuffing won't fall out.

Chop half the thyme with 1 clove of garlic and scrunch together with the butter, 1 tin of peaches, and a good pinch of salt and pepper. Push the butter into the pocket and pat back into shape. Lay the pancetta, bacon or Parma ham over the pork, leaving the skin side uncovered, and tie up firmly with 3 to 4 pieces of string.

Place skin-side up in a roasting tray with the remaining peaches, the garlic cloves, thyme, and half of the white wine. Roast for around 1 hour until the skin is crisp and golden.

When ready, remove the pork and peaches to a plate and leave to rest for 15 minutes whilst you finish the sauce. To do this, remove most of the fat from the roasting tray, then place the tray over a high heat. Squash the cooked garlic and add 1 tablespoon of flour. Stir and add the rest of the wine with a glass of water or stock. Simmer and leave to reduce for a few minutes. Strain and add any extra juices from the rested pork. Check the seasoning and consistency and serve drizzled over the sliced pork.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 25 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Linguine with Pancetta, Olive Oil, Chile, Clams and White Wine Sauce

1 pound dried good quality linguine

Olive oil

4 rashers pancetta or dry-cured smoky bacon, sliced thinly

1 large clove of garlic, finely chopped

1 to 2 dried red chilli's, crumbled

1 1/2 pounds clams

2 glasses (10 ounces) of white wine

1 good handful of parsley leaves, roughly chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook your linguine in salted boiling water until al dente. Meanwhile, get a pan hot and add a couple of good lugs (tablespoons) of olive oil and the pancetta. Fry until golden, then add the garlic and chilies. Soften them slightly and add the clams. Stir, then add the white wine. Put a lid on the pan and cook for a further couple of minutes until all the clams have opened—discard any that remain closed. Remove from the heat and add the drained linguine. Stir in the parsley, correct the seasoning and serve with all the cooking juices.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Salmon Fillet Wrapped in Prosciutto with Herby Lentils, Spinach and Yoghurt

9 ounces lentils

4 (8-ounce) salmon fillets, skinned and pin-boned

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

8 slices of prosciutto

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 lemon, juiced

2 good handfuls mixed herbs (flat-leaf parsley, basil, and mint), chopped

3 large handfuls spinach, chopped

7 ounces plain yoghurt, lightly seasoned with salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Put the lentils into a pan, cover with water, bring to a boil and simmer until tender. Season the salmon fillets with a little pepper before wrapping them in the prosciutto slices. Leave some of the flesh exposed. Drizzle with olive oil and roast in the oven for around 10 minutes until the prosciutto is golden. Feel free to cook the salmon for less time if pinker is to your liking. Drain away most of the water from the lentils and season carefully with salt, pepper, the lemon juice and olive oil. Just before serving, stir the herbs and spinach into the lentils on a high heat, until wilted. Place on plates with the salmon and finish with a drizzle of lightly seasoned yoghurt.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Baked Fennel with Garlic Butter and Vermouth

This dish is so quick. I made it the other day, chucked it together and it's really light and flavoursome. It goes fantastically well with any meat or fish.

3 large heads fennel

1 clove garlic, finely sliced

3 large knobs (tablespoons) of butter

2 wine glasses (10 ounces) vermouth (white wine also works)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Remove any discoloured parts of the fennel, then cut the tops off and slice finely, reserving the leaves. I normally slice each fennel from the top to the root, into about 4 pieces, but it's not that important. You can slice them finer and more delicately if you like. Literally throw all the ingredients except the reserved leaves into a baking dish. Rip off a piece of parchment paper, run it under cold water and scrunch it up to make it soft. Then place it snugly over and around the fennel, not the actual dish. This bakes and steams the fennel at the same time—basically making it really tasty! Cook in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until tender. Scatter with the fennel leaves before serving.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Pineapple and Grapefruit Frappe

This recipe works with just about any fruit or combination of your choice because the principle is so basic. A frappe is basically a cross between a granita (like an icy Slush Puppy) and a smooth sorbet. As both pineapples and grapefruits can vary so much in natural sweetness, add the sugar to your own taste.

2 ripe pineapples, peeled and roughly chopped

3 grapefruits, halved and juiced

Sugar, to taste

Whizz up the pineapple in a liquidizer until smooth and pass through a course sieve. Add the grapefruit juice and stir in sugar to taste, remembering that the sweetness from the sugar will lessen slightly when frozen, so to use a touch more than you normally would. Place in the freezer for around 2 1/2 hours to set, stirring every 45 minutes.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 2 hours 40 minutes

Campari and Passionfruit Sorbet

1 cup water

7 ounces sugar

15 passion fruits

1 wine glass (5 ounces) Campari

Place the water and sugar in a pan, bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for a while. Halve the passion fruits and scoop out the flesh, seeds and juice using a spoon. Stir this up—you can pass it through a sieve to remove the seeds, but quite frankly I think that's palaver (nonsense). I like the seeds. Mix the passion fruit with the Campari and sugar syrup in a plastic tub or earthenware dish and place in the freezer. Generally, sorbet takes 2 hours to set. Try to stir it around every 1/2 hour if you remember. Serve on its own, with some seasonal fruit, or in a cone with some vanilla ice cream.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 2 hours 15 minutes

Salad of Boiled Potatoes, Avocado and Cress

I had to do this salad, even though cress must be one of the tackiest things in the world. For some reason I'm absolutely addicted to it and love it to bits. This is my favourite combination.

1 1/2 pound scrubbed new waxy potatoes

1 large ripe avocado

3 bunches of cress, water or pepper, washed

Olive oil

1 to 2 lemons, juiced

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Cook the new potatoes in salted boiling water until very tender, then drain. Slice the avocado in half and remove the stone. Peel and slice it lengthways into thick slices or chunks (however you really like) and place in a bowl. Slice any large potatoes in half—this will expose their flesh to the olive oil and lemon juice. If they are small, leave them whole. Add to the bowl. Throw the cress in, then add a couple of good lugs (tablespoons) of olive oil and lemon juice, to taste. Season and toss. Serve on a big plate, scattered with any remaining cress. This is brilliant with chicken, fish or as a salad on its own, especially in the summer.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Celeriac and Celery Salad

This is a really clean salad, fantastic with fish or cold meats. For it to be as delicate as it should be, the celery and celeriac should be very finely sliced. You can do this by hand with a knife or with a mandolin slicer, which you can pick up really cheaply. It will make the job so much easier.

I normally use 1 whole celeriac to 1 head of celery.

All you have to do is strip back the celery and peel the celeriac and then finely slice. Place in a bowl with some chopped flat-leaf parsley and a handful of pomegranate seeds (make sure you use just the red seeds, not the bitter yellow stuff). Season and dress with olive oil and lemon juice dressing. This salad can be dressed a little before you need it, as opposed to at the table. Place on a large plate and sprinkle with some extra pomegranate seeds. Sometimes I crumble goat's cheese over this, or some ricotta salata which I encrust with dried herbs, salt and pepper, drizzled with olive oil and bake until golden in a hot oven.

All you have to do is strip back the celery and peel the celeriac and then finely slice. Place in a bowl with some chopped flat-leaf parsley and a handful of pomegranate seeds (make sure you use just the red seeds, not the bitter yellow stuff). Season and dress with olive oil and lemon juice dressing. This salad can be dressed a little before you need it, as

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 2 minutes

Botham Burger

2 pounds minced beef, preferably organic

2 medium red onions, finely chopped

2 eggs

1 to 2 handfuls fresh bread crumbs

1 tablespoon coriander seeds, crushed

1 small pinch cumin seeds, crushed

1 heaped teaspoon Dijon mustard

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Mix and scrunch all the ingredients together. Use the bread crumbs as required to bind and lighten the mixture. Divide into 4, then gently and lightly mould and pack each burger together into smallish cricket-ball-sized shapes. Place in the oven and roast for 25 minutes, which should leave the middle slightly pink and the outside nice and crispy. Serve with a griddled bun, a little salad, some gherkins, tomato salsa, a pint of Guinness and a bottle of Ketchup. Howzat!

The good thing about burgers is you can make them thin and big, fat and big, or even turn them into meatballs. In the early days of Cricketers, the pub where I grew up, I remember my dad used to serve a whopping great burger the size of a cricket-ball topped with a huge amount of Cheddar cheese and homemade tomato relish. He very classily called it the Botham burger.

That's what I love about Essex boys' sheer taste. Feel free to add extra spices if that's what takes your fancy, but here's a really solid basic beefburger recipe. I never thought when I became a chef that I would come back round to respecting the famous beefburger. Unfortunately it hasn't been on the pub's menu for about 10 years, what a shame. This might change Dad's mind.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Cajun Spicy Rub

2 tablespoons paprika
2 tablespoons cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon black peppercorns, ground
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
3 tablespoons onion flakes
2 tablespoons dried oregano
Salt

Pound all the ingredients together until you have a powdery consistency and rub all over your chosen meat.

Yield: 1/2 cup

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 7 minutes

Fennel Seed, Thyme and Garlic Rub

4 tablespoons fennel seeds
2 good handfuls fresh thyme leaves
2 cloves garlic
1 bay leaf, ripped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pound together and rub all over your chosen meat.

Yield: 1/2 cup

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Hot and Fragrant Rub

2 tablespoons fennel seeds, crushed
2 tablespoons cumin seeds, crushed
2 tablespoons coriander seeds, crushed
1/2 tablespoons fenugreek seeds, crushed
1/2 tablespoon black peppercorns, crushed
1 clove, crushed
1/2 a cinnamon stick, broken into small pieces
2 cardamom pods, crushed
Salt

Mix together the ingredients and smear over your chosen meat before leaving it to marinate

Yield: 1/2 cup

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 2 minutes

Rosemary, Garlic and Lemon Marinade

2 good handfuls fresh rosemary, pounded
6 cloves garlic, crushed
10 lugs (10 tablespoons) olive oil
3 lemons, halved, juiced and skin squashed
Freshly ground black pepper

Mix everything together and massage on to your chosen meat. Leave the meat in the marinade until your ready to cook it

Yield: 1 cup

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Yoghurt, Mint and Lime Marinade

*1 pint natural organic yoghurt
2 good handfuls of fresh mint, chopped
2 limes, zested and juiced
1 tablespoon coriander seeds, crushed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
A couple of lugs (2 tablespoons) olive oil*

Mix together the ingredients and smear over your chosen meat before leaving it to marinate.

Yield: 2 1/2 cups
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 3 minutes

Asian Marmalade

2 stalks lemon grass, crushed and bruised
1 small handful kaffir lime leaves, torn
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 thumb-sized piece ginger, peeled and chopped
1 fresh red chilli, finely chopped
2 limes, zested, halved, and juiced
10 good lugs (tablespoons) olive oil

Scrunch the whole lot together in a bowl and coat over your chosen meat. Also works brilliantly with fish.

Yield: 1 cup

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 2 minutes

Seared Encrusted Carpaccio of Beef

1 heaping tablespoon whole coriander seeds, smashed
1 handful rosemary, finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Light sprinkling dried oregano
3 1/2 pound fillet of beef
1 handful ginger, peeled and finely sliced
2 to 3 red or green chilli's, seeded and finely sliced
Good handful radishes, finely sliced
Small handful coriander, leaves picked, stalks finely sliced
Sesame oil
Soy sauce, to taste
2 limes, juiced

Pound the coriander seeds in a pestle and mortar, then mix the chopped rosemary, salt, pepper and oregano and sprinkle on a board or work surface. Roll and press the fillet of beef over this, making sure the meat is completely covered with the coating. In a very hot, ridged pan, or on a barbecue, sear off the meat for around 5 minutes until brown and slightly crisp on all sides. Remove from the pan. Allow it to rest for 5 minutes before slicing as thinly as possible and lay the sliced beef on a large plate. Gather the ginger slices and slice finely across into little delicate matchsticks. Flick these randomly over the beef with the chilli's, radishes and coriander. Drizzle with a very small amount of sesame oil, some soy sauce and freshly squeezed lime juice.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Slow-Cooked and Stuffed Baby Bell Chile Peppers

10 small, round baby bell chilli peppers (cherry peppers)

Small bottle olive oil

2 good handfuls rocket (arugula)

1 good handful parsley

1 small handful capers, soaked and drained

1 handful anchovies

10 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or enough to cover

Salt and fresh ground black pepper

Halve the chilli's, remove the seeds and then wash in cold water. Then drain. Tightly pack into a large earthenware dish and cover with the olive oil then place in the oven at 325 for about 45 minutes until tender.

Carefully remove the dish from the oven and leave to cool. Take the chilli's out of the dish. Pour the olive oil back into the bottle. This is great on salads, over mozzarella and other cheeses, on pizzas, or over pasta. Finely chop the rocket, parsley and capers. Roughly chop anchovies and then mix everything up in a bowl with balsamic vinegar. Season with salt and pepper. Stuff this filling into your bell peppers (cherry peppers) and serve on a plate as tapas.

Yield: 10 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Blackened Sweet Aubergine

4 firm aubergines (eggplants)

Pinch ground cumin

1 clove garlic, pounded to a paste

Extra virgin olive oil

2 or 3 lemons, juiced, or to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Handful chopped cilantro, basil or parsley, optional

Preheat the oven to its hottest setting. Place aubergines (eggplants) in a tray and cook at the top of the oven for about 35 minutes, until the insides are very soft and the outsides dry and almost crisp. Remove from the oven, slit the skin and scrape out the flesh. Add cumin and garlic, stir in and break up. You can make this smooth or coarse, depending on how you like it. Add olive oil to loosen. Add lemon juice and season, to taste. I would never serve this hot but it's great warm or at room temperature. If adding herbs do this at the last minute, roughly or finely chopped.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Sweet Chilli and Pepper Salsa

Thinly sliced focaccia tastes great with this dip. It is perfect for drinks and parties.

2 red peppers

1/2 red onion, finely chopped

4 medium/large red chillies, seeded and finely chopped

1/2 clove garlic, finely chopped

8 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 handful parsley, finely chopped

1 handful basil, finely chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Grill the peppers whole, turning at intervals, until the skin is blackened. Place in a bowl while still hot and cover with plastic wrap. Leave them to steam (this makes it easier to remove the skin from the peppers). Skin, remove seeds and finely chop the peppers. Then add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Taste for seasoning. Leave for 1 hour to let the flavours develop. Check for seasoning before serving.

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Apricot and Pistachio Tarte Tatin

7 ounces sugar

2 tablespoons water

10 to 12 apricots

1 3/4 ounces unsalted butter, diced

9 ounce slab puff pastry

Small handful thyme, leaves picked

Small handful shelled pistachio nuts, chopped

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (170 degrees C/gas 3). In a pan, simmer half the sugar with a couple of tablespoons of water until a light golden caramel has formed. Meanwhile, halve the apricots and remove the stones. Do not throw the stones away, I will explain why later.

Sprinkle the apricots with the remaining sugar, mix, and leave to sit for 10 minutes. The sugar will draw out the lovely juicy sweetness from the apricots.

Check the caramel sauce. If it is ready, remove from the heat. Stir in the butter and pour the sauce into a non-stick tart tin.

Whack the apricots on top and spread them out to cover the base of the tin. Now take about half of your apricot stones and bash them open. Inside you will find a nutty kernel, which tastes just like Amaretto, great for adding flavour.* Finely slice the kernels and sprinkle them over the apricots with half the thyme.

Roll out the pastry until it is just slightly larger than your tart tin. Cover the apricots with the pastry, pushing it right into the sides of the tin. Place the tart in the oven for around 25 to 35 minutes until pastry is puffed and golden brown.

When the tart is cooked, put a large plate on top of the tin and turn the tart upside down onto it. Sprinkle with the rest of the thyme and the pistachio nuts just before serving. Fantastic served with ice cream or whipped cream.

*Apricot kernels should only be consumed cooked, as they have trace amounts of nitrites in them, which are slightly toxic until roasted.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 55 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Sea Bass with Fennel and Olives

7 (8-ounce) sea bass fillets

2 handfuls purple and green basil and flat-leaf parsley, finely sliced

Good extra-virgin olive oil

Maldon sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 or 2 heads fennel, halved and finely sliced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely sliced

4 large handfuls green and red chard, stalks finely sliced

Line a tray with greaseproof paper and rub it with olive oil. Score the skin side of the fish fillets (about halfway through the fish) and stuff with the herbs. Place the fish, skin side up, on the tray and cover with a few good lugs of olive oil and salt and pepper. Broil for 5 to 7 minutes until skin is crisp and fish is cooked through.

Gently fry the fennel and garlic with a pinch of salt in a good lug of olive oil, until softened and lightly coloured. Add the chard, with another pinch of salt, and cook until the stalks are soft.

For the sauce:

1 clove garlic, finely sliced

4 to 6 anchovy fillets

4 good tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 large handfuls of small black olives, stones removed

3 ounces half-and-half

Handful of flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped

To make the sauce, gently fry the garlic and anchovies in the olive oil until soft. Chop half the olives, keeping the other half whole and add these to the garlic and anchovies. Fry for another minute. Remove from the heat and add the cream and parsley. Season with a little pepper and add some more olive oil. Serve the fish and vegetables with the warm sauce poured over the top.

Yield: 8 servings

Prep Time: 35 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Sticky Chocolate Sponge Pudding

7 ounces sugar
7 ounces butter
7 ounces self-raising flour, sifted
1 rounded teaspoon baking powder
3 large eggs, preferably free-range
3 rounded tablespoons cocoa powder
8 tablespoons warm water
Handful flaked almonds
3 3/4 ounces cooking chocolate, broken up

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C / gas 4). Beat the sugar and butter until pale and fluffy. Sieve the flour and baking powder into the butter mixture. Add the eggs and mix it all together. Then mix the cocoa powder with 8 tablespoons of warm water, until smooth.

Fold the chocolate paste, almonds, and chocolate pieces into the cake mixture. Pour the mixture into a greased baking tin, spreading it out evenly. Bake for about 18 to 20 minutes.

For the chocolate sauce:

3 3/4 ounces cooking chocolate
3 3/4 ounces confectioners' sugar
3 3/4 ounces butter
4 tablespoons milk

Meanwhile, melt the chocolate sauce ingredients in a bowl over some lightly simmering water. Stir until blended well. When the pudding is cooked, remove from the oven and pour over the chocolate sauce while still hot.

Yield: 8 servings
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 30 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Steak with a Spicy Rub

Good handful thyme, leaves left on stalks

Pinch cumin seeds

Small handful fresh oregano

2 cloves garlic, skin left on

Pinch Maldon sea salt

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 lemon, zested and chopped

8 (8 ounce) sirloin steaks

In a pestle and mortar, smash up the thyme, cumin seeds, oregano, garlic, and salt. Using your fist, bash the steaks to make them slightly thinner and larger. Add the olive oil and lemon zest to the spicy rub and smear this into each steak.

The steaks can marinate for 20 minutes to 8 hours. Fry the steaks in a pan, the time will obviously depend on how you like your steak.

Make sure you let the steaks rest for 5 minutes before you serve them, they will be much juicier.

Yield: 8 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 25 minutes to 8 hours

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Medium

Tomato and Runner Beans

1 1/2 pounds (750g) runner beans, sliced diagonally into 2-inch pieces

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

A few good lugs (ounces) extra virgin olive oil

1 (28 pound) can chopped tomatoes

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Steam the beans in a foil covered colander over your potatoes or blanch in salted boiling water until tender.

Whilst the beans are cooking, make a quick tomato sauce by frying the garlic gently in some olive oil. Add the tomatoes and bring to the boil.

Add a little salt and pepper and simmer for about 15 minutes until you have a thick tomato sauce. Season, to taste.

Stir the beans into the sauce until they are all covered

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Mash

8 large potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1/2 pint single cream (light cream or half-and-half)
3 good knobs (tablespoons) butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Pinch nutmeg, optional

Cook the potatoes in boiling salted water until tender.

Drain and mash until smooth. Add the cream, butter, seasoning, and nutmeg and mix well into your lovely mashed potato.

Yield: 8 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Slow-Roasted Leg of Pork with Spicy Scratchings

1 leg or shoulder of pork
3 tablespoons fennel seeds
3 tablespoons coriander seeds
Pinch dried chilli pepper flakes
Maldon sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
1 bulb garlic, skin left on the cloves
1 handful fresh sage
1 handful fresh rosemary

Ask your butcher to remove and reserve the skin and bone from the leg of pork. To make the scratchings, cut the skin into two pieces and score incisions through each piece. In a pestle and mortar, crush half the fennel seeds with half the coriander seeds, chilli flakes, and a pinch of salt. Sprinkle the spice mix over the top and finish off with another good pinch of salt. Pour a little olive oil over the pork skin and bake in the oven, on a rack over a tray to catch the fat, in a preheated 425 degrees F (220 degrees C/gas 7) oven until very crispy.

Make crisscross incisions all over the pork, on both sides. Crush the remaining fennel and coriander seeds with another good pinch of salt. Sprinkle over both sides of the pork, and finish off with a grinding of black pepper. Place the pork and garlic cloves in a roasting tray. Cover with a few good lugs of extra-virgin olive oil. Place the sage and rosemary in a pestle and mortar and gently crush together until they are lightly bruised and have released their flavours. Add 4 tablespoons of olive oil. Squeeze the flavoured oil over the pork and rub the herbs all over it. Cook in the oven in a preheated 400 degrees F (200 degrees C/gas 6) oven for about 4 to 4 1/2 hours. Any leftovers are great to use in sandwiches the next day.

Yield: 10 servings
Prep Time: 5 minutes
Cook Time: 5 hours
Difficulty: Medium

Summer Crumble

3 Bramley apples, quartered, cored and finely chopped

2 punnets (small baskets, or pints) blackberries

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Small handful basil, chopped

5 heaping tablespoons sugar

4 heaping tablespoons flour

1/4 pound butter

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C or gas 6).

Put the fruit into the bowl with the balsamic vinegar, basil, and 2 tablespoons of sugar. Add a little more sugar if your blackberries are a bit sour. Mix and put aside to marinate.

Using your fingers, rub together the flour, butter, and the rest of the sugar (you can also do this in a food processor, just blitz until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs). I prefer to do this by hand as I like to end up with a nice rustic-looking crumble with some bits bigger than others.

Put the fruit into an ovenproof serving dish or into individual dishes. Sprinkle the crumble mix over the fruit, making sure to pile more into the middle of the dish. Bake it in the oven for about 30 minutes, or until the middle of the crumble is evenly golden and the fruit has started to bubble up around the edges.

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Easy